Chapter 701 The Cheerful Franca

□□In Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca, dressed in a camel-colored cashmere coat, shivered and said to Lumian, "As soon as I have the money, I'm definitely renting a villa with underfloor heating!"

The concept of underfloor heating was proposed by Emperor Roselle. By laying metal pipes in the house during construction, boiling water could flow through them, providing summer-like warmth in confined spaces and keeping out the cold weather.

This was a must-have amenity for Trier's current upscale residences.

"Why would a Demoness like you be afraid of the cold?" Lumian scoffed.

He glanced at Jenna and noticed she was wearing a black cotton dress and dark makeup, as if portraying a Witch or Vampire in the little details of her daily life.

"I'm not a Pyromaniac. A Demoness's black flames have no temperature!" Franca retorted with a smile.

Lumian casually settled onto the divan.

"Aren't Demonesses skilled with ice? Don't they have resistance to frost and cold?"

Franca reclined in her recliner, pulled up a cashmere blanket, and chuckled.

"I admit my performance just now was a little exaggerated, but Trier's winters really are cold. It's mainly because it's so humid. It's like being soaked in a semi-frozen lake."

After the small talk, Franca sighed and said, "I've already obtained more information about Moran Avigny and the corresponding security detail. We can put the capture plan on the agenda. And you, my friend, are about to participate in the Dream Festival. Talk about a scheduling conflict."

Lumian's expression remained unchanged as he replied, "The Dream Festival is over."

"Huh?" Franca and Jenna were taken aback.

Already?

Lumian recounted everything that had transpired during the Dream Festival, including Madam Magician's subsequent explanation.

Of course, as the name Farbauti couldn't be pronounced in any language, Lumian referred to it as the Devil Monarch and replaced Naboredisley with "the Demon with a long name."

Franca's breathing quickened upon hearing that Lumian had donned a golden mask and spotted the suspected Underworld Daoist. Lumian's description of the Underworld Daoist's attire made her eyes light up like sunlight dancing on a lake.

Thankfully, her self-control was impressive. She endured until Lumian finished explaining the entire situation before asking anxiously, "Will there be another Dream Festival next year?"

"You want to participate in next year's Dream Festival and come into direct contact with the Underworld Daoist?" Lumian could guess Franca's thoughts.

Franca nodded emphatically.

"I believe that if the Underworld Daoist can bestow the Evernight pathway's power on Amandina, I, uh, a Demoness, shouldn't have any issues either. I wouldn't mind taking Him as my master!

"Don't worry. As long as I remain lucid, I won't unleash my bestial instincts during the Dream Festival."

She teased herself.

Originally, you wanted to say that you're from the same homeland and not a Demoness, right? Lumian chuckled and said, "It's not impossible, but you have to become an Angel first."

"…" Franca fell silent.

Jenna pondered and said, "There's something I don't understand. Isn't it the case that after obtaining the ability to stay lucid in the special dream, the corresponding dream projection will gradually dissipate? Why didn't Hisoka's?"

Lumian had already considered this question.

"Perhaps this is one of the reasons Hisoka had to leave Tizamo.

"The ability to stay lucid in the special dream shouldn't be permanent. Once you leave Tizamo, it will gradually fade. Therefore, Hisoka not only had to leave Tizamo, but also had to return two to three times a year for at least a week each time to maintain the existence of the dream projection."

After discussing the Dream Festival, Franca briefly recounted the information she had obtained from 007 the previous night.

"Moran Avigny's family has a long history. Members span the military, political, artistic, and business worlds. Combined with the information Madam Judgment gave us, I suspect this is a branch of the Tamara family. Their dark-gray eyes are one of the defining characteristics of the Tamara bloodline!

"Of course, not everyone with dark-gray eyes belongs to the Tamara family. It's more that members of the family are likely to have dark-gray eyes.

"Based on the close connection between a large branch of the Tamara family and the Demoness Sect, it's very likely that Demoness of Black Clarice also shares the Tamara family's bloodline.

"Following my hypothesis, the Demoness of Black might be a mixed-blood descendant of the Sauron family who pledged allegiance to the Demoness Sect and the Tamara family."

This was the only explanation for Demoness of Black Clarice's reaction when she heard about the Sauron family. It was also the only explanation for her indulging Browns Sauron!

Lumian didn't interrupt as Franca continued, "We need to face not only Moran Avigny but also the hidden Tamara family and the Mirror People faction. Moran Avigny might possess powerful Beyonder powers himself. Furthermore, Bureau 8, Purifiers, and Machinery Hivemind rotate daily, with a regular Beyonder team providing protection.

"What my friend means is that if we're unafraid of sacrifice, there's still a chance of assassinating Moran Avigny. However, capturing him alive or channeling his spirit is very difficult and dangerous."

What 007 truly meant was that the Purifiers wouldn't go easy on us or provide overt assistance. However, if Moran Avigny's true nature as a Mirror Person is exposed after his death, 007 would find a way to allow us—the captured assassins—an opportunity to escape, just like when Jenna killed Hugues Artois. However, if we didn't want to obtain more information about the Mirror People through Moran Avigny, wouldn't it be better to inform the authorities and let them handle the arrest? Lumian pondered for a moment and said to Franca, "Let's not rush into a plan. We'll discuss it tomorrow."

"Why wait until tomorrow?" Franca asked, holding the stack of papers 007 had given her.

Lumian chuckled.

"After I find a safe place to complete my advancement and become a Fate Appropriator, perhaps a special, mixed ability related to fate will appear. That might help us obtain new ideas and come up with more effective solutions."

In the current four-person team, it was no secret that Lumian possessed the power of the Inevitability pathway.

Franca blurted out in surprise, "You can obtain a new boon so quickly?"

"Didn't I just mention it?" Lumian smiled. "I culled nearly 20 Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 bestowed in one go, significantly digesting the potion."

Franca pursed her lips and signaled to Lumian with her eyes: Look, look into my eyes! They're filled with jealousy!

Lumian turned to Anthony and asked, "What did you mean by genuine identity?"

Anthony, who had been listening quietly and was on the verge of being forgotten, explained simply, "Actually, it was a hint from Madam Justice. That identity is very strange. His background, education, and experiences are all real, but there's actually no such person. And the people who might expose this are either long dead or out of town, the kind who won't return for years."

Franca made a judgment based on her experience. "It seems it was meticulously crafted years in advance as a disguise."

Since they weren't discussing a plan to deal with Moran Avigny today, Anthony didn't stay long. He had to prepare for tonight's banquet.

"Where do you plan to advance to Fate Appropriator?" Jenna asked Lumian. "The sacrificial square in the catacombs?"

It belonged to two orthodox gods and could protect advancers from additional interference.

"I'm afraid I'll trigger a taboo and be purified by sunlight," Lumian dismissed the suggestion with amusement. "Advancing to Conspirer is different from advancing to Fate Appropriator."

One belonged to the pathways of the divine, while the other belonged to an evil god's domain!

Lumian had already decided on a location to advance.

It was the Nation of the Evernight!

Termiboros's well-behaved nature kept Lumian concerned that He was waiting for an opportunity to stir up trouble. And as a Fate Appropriator began to involve core abilities in the Inevitability domain, it was very likely that Termiboros would tamper at this Sequence.

Therefore, Lumian had to be cautious. He planned to advance in a safe place that could eliminate many external influences.

Among them, the Nation of the Evernight was the best choice. Furthermore, Lumian had planned to contact Hela in the next two days to share information about the Underworld Daoist and the Dream Festival.

Franca looked at Lumian in enlightenment. "You want to advance at our mysticism gathering?"

"Yes." Lumian nodded slightly.

Franca, who was in a good mood, took the initiative to help. "I'll help you write the letter!"

After she entered the bedroom and closed the door, Lumian looked at Jenna and said, "You're very quiet today."

Jenna smiled. "An excellent theater actress must know how to act like a lady."

Lumian glanced at Franca's door.

"Madame Red Boots seems to be in high spirits today. She's cracking jokes left and right."

"It's true she's been in a good mood recently," Jenna replied truthfully.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully and didn't probe further.

Jenna's lips curled into a smile. "Why don't you keep asking?"

Lumian leaned back on the sofa and laughed self-

deprecatingly.

"My sister once taught me that there's no need to inquire too deeply about certain matters. If I know too much, I might regret it. I might even have to face problems I'm unwilling to face."

Jenna listened attentively, placed her hand on her cheek, and asked with a smile, "What are you afraid of?"

Lumian strategically took a sip of black tea and said, "It's not fear; it's respect."

Jenna gazed at him and suddenly laughed.

She didn't press further and chatted with Lumian about the details of Tizamo.

Before long, Franca opened the door and exclaimed with a smile, "It's on for tonight!"

…

At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian and Franca swiftly materialized, and Hela was already waiting.

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Chapter 702 Fate Appropriator

□□Before Lumian had a chance to say anything, Franca eagerly recounted the events involving the Underworld Daoist during the Dream Festival.

She said excitedly, "The interaction between our two worlds is even more intricate than I had imagined!"

"Who would have thought there was another point of interaction beyond the Samaritan Women's Spring, and it's all tied to that mysterious illusory river."

Silently, Franca mused, It's a shame we still haven't located the man believed to be from our world who was seen on the fourth level of the catacombs… Seriously, what's taking 007, no—the Eternal Blazing Sun Church so long? They haven't even tracked down the traitor who worked with April Fool's…

Once Franca had finished speaking, Lumian provided a concise explanation of the origins of the black ancient tomb and the ancient corpse.

Hela, still in her black widow attire, listened intently, gently nodding her head.

"It's now evident that the illusory river isn't a reference to the River Styx. It must be something far more significant than that."

"Absolutely." Lumian wasn't caught off guard by Hela's statement. "The black ancient tomb doesn't just embody the power of the Death pathway; it also represents the Evernight and Warrior pathways."

In the current world, all the legends surrounding the River Styx were connected to death.

Lumian speculated that this might involve beings such as the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the Mother Tree of Desire, and the Great Mother, who held multiple thrones linked to various pathways.

Hela glanced at Franca, falling silent for a moment before speaking.

"If the Armored Shadow is right, the Underworld Daoist is in a precarious state. If you intend to interact with Him, you must exercise extreme caution and ensure you have an escape route from the corresponding area."

The Armored Shadow had described the Underworld Daoist as having "sacrificed himself to enter the river," implying the sacrifice of one's physical form or life.

"I understand." Franca let out a sigh. "I'll give this matter more thought once I reach Sequence 5."

As she sighed, a smug thought crossed her mind, The Pleasure potion has been largely digested lately. Even without additional opportunities, I can start preparing for the Demoness of Affliction's advancement ritual within two to three months… I need to begin gathering the necessary potion ingredients now…

I can't mention it, I mustn't mention it—I can't let Lumian know. Bragging would make me seem crass and disrespectful to Jenna…

Lumian's curious gaze alternated between Hela and Franca a couple of times.

He sensed that Madame Hela had something crucial to tell Franca but refrained from doing so.

It was rare for Lumian to perceive Madame Hela as having something on her mind. Her glance at Franca and few seconds of silence gave him the impression of hesitancy.

Regrettably, Franca often has a carefree nature and doesn't pay much attention to details. Otherwise, she might be able to extract some information from her through direct questioning… Lumian's mind raced, and he concluded that if Madame Hela chose not to say anything at this point, she must have her reasons. Thus, he suppressed his curiosity and gestured towards the front of the dilapidated palace.

"I'll get the ritual ready."

"Sounds good," Franca responded with enthusiasm.

While she had witnessed Lumian acquire Ascetic powers, that had taken place in Fourth Epoch Trier. A myriad of dangers had intertwined, causing her to shudder with fear. She had to maintain constant vigilance of her surroundings, unable to "appreciate" the situation with the same level of ease as she could now.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian retrieved a metal canister from a hidden pocket and tossed it to Franca.

"If things start going poorly for me later on, forcefully break through the wall of spirituality and throw this in front of me or on me."

"Should I unscrew the cap for you?" Franca asked, a smile playing on her lips.

"What do you think?" Lumian arched an eyebrow.

"Naturally," Franca replied, her smile unwavering. "I'm just trying to lighten the mood. I want you to feel at ease."

"I appreciate it!" Lumian turned and made his way to the massive stone chair in the depths of the ancient palace.

His intuition suggested that the huge, mottled stone chair might have a connection to Mr. Fool.

This would enable him to draw Mr. Fool's attention during the impending ritual.

As Franca and Hela watched Lumian arrange the corresponding items on the stone chair, setting it up as an altar and placing a Loen gold pound reverently in front of the grayish-white candle symbolizing the deity, Hela calmly remarked, "Don't be concerned about not receiving a response. The secrets will remain secret, while the rest will be revealed."

Lumian felt himself relax as he consecrated the ritual silver dagger, erecting a wall of spirituality.

The voices of Franca and Hela faded into the background, as if emanating from a great distance.

Rather than rushing into the ritual, Lumian lowered his voice and proactively provoked Termiboros.

"I'm about to extract your power once more. Any thoughts on the matter?"

He aimed to enrage Termiboros to a certain degree. Only then might Termiboros inadvertently expose any concealed issues in His response, allowing Lumian to discern whether this Inevitability Angel was secretly plotting something.

The sooner he uncovered it, the sooner he could address it and find a resolution!

Termiboros's imposing voice resonated.

"The further you venture, the closer you draw to the end. This is an inevitability—irreversible."

"Is that how you console yourself?" Lumian scoffed at Termiboros's enigmatic behavior.

Termiboros's voice reverberated within Lumian's body.

"Boons bring the recipient closer to the bestower. You may believe you're extracting my power, but in truth, you're steadily aligning your fate with mine, becoming more and more like me.

"This grants me glimpses through your eyes and your fate.

"You and I are merely bugs ensnared by fate. Apart from the greatest of existences, all living beings share this commonality.

"In the near future, you will come to understand: "Death is the end of all things, and madness is an eternal melody."

That's essentially the same as saying nothing… Is Termiboros implying that I will face a setback in the near future? Lumian chuckled and said, "Are you deliberately saying this to make me obtain the power of a Fate Appropriator while burdened with worry and fear, hoping I'll die here?

"Don't concern yourself. Death and madness won't deter me."

Without awaiting Termiboros's reply, Lumian fixed his gaze upon the candle flame and recited in a deep, resonant voice, "Power of Inevitability!

"You are the past, the present, and the future;

"You are the cause, the effect, and the process;

"…"

As the ritual progressed, Franca and Hela bore witness to the transformation of all the items on the altar. Stones softened, candles expanded, and the ground decayed into a swamp. Countless strange insects loomed in the void.

The darkness outside the dilapidated palace intensified. A silver-black liquid flowed from Lumian's chest, enveloping him like corrupted mercury.

Lumian writhed in agony. Throughout this process, his body alternated between contortion and normalcy, occasionally assuming postures that defied human anatomy. It was as though he were boneless, his skin and flesh infused with mercury.

Franca was startled and experienced an inexplicable, illusory pain.

Amidst the excruciating and familiar pain, Lumian caught sight of Aurore.

Aurore, with her thick, long blond hair, was attempting the Soul Summoning Spell!

Lumian stepped forward and intervened, stopping Aurore.

Just as he rejoiced in the belief that the problem had been nipped in the bud and Aurore wouldn't fracture into the evil personality of Roche Louise Sanson, he was horrified to discover that Aurore's body had undergone a drastic transformation. In a bloody state, she had expanded into a monster with three heads and six arms, sitting cross-legged.

Lumian witnessed Aurore seeking assistance from Hela. Reluctantly, he offered his help, preventing his sister from forgetting this matter. However, when Hela arrived, Aurore had already transformed into a colossal three-headed, six-armed monster, despite the final ritual not having been performed.

Aurore, at various stages of life, appeared before Lumian. They were on the verge of making pivotal choices.

Lumian desperately tried to alter the Aurores' fates and prevent them from descending into the abyss. However, each time, although he managed to redirect fate to another tributary, Aurore's spirit and flesh ultimately crumbled, transforming her into a three-headed, six-armed monster.

Is this inevitability? Is this an irreversible outcome? Lumian's eyes turned bloodshot as he made increasingly futile efforts.

At that instant, he caught a whiff of an elegant and sweet scent, and a soothing chant echoed in his ears.

Lumian quickly regained his senses and clarity of mind.

The Aurores before him abruptly vanished, leaving only the quietly burning candle flames.

Instinctively, Lumian glanced behind him and realized that Franca and Hela were nearby. The wall of spirituality had been shattered.

Simultaneously, Franca observed the flickering silver and iron-

black colors in Lumian's eyes before they merged and settled into a silvery-black hue.

Lumian exhaled, recognizing that he had evaded danger and successfully acquired the power of a Fate Appropriator.

Yet, a profound sense of frustration and disappointment lingered within him.

What he had just experienced in the illusion seemed to foretell the ultimate outcome of his desire to resurrect Aurore.

After ten to twenty seconds, Lumian finally broke free from those emotions and regained his determination.

How could anyone give up without even trying!

Franca breathed a sigh of relief, screwed the cap back on, and asked with a smile, "How did it go? Any new abilities?"

You really don't consider yourself an outsider. How can you nonchalantly inquire about someone's new Beyonder powers? Lumian silently criticized Franca as he meticulously observed his transformation.

His eyes, which had just returned to normal, once again turned silvery-black, reflecting the images of Franca and Hela.

Then, he perceived the mercury-colored illusory river that corresponded to the two ladies. He saw the sparkling light representing their past and present river trunks and the numerous tributaries that had branched off from the present.

The illusory river slowly advanced, devouring all the tributaries, leaving only one behind, transforming it into the main bulk. The main bulk continued to split into new tributaries…

Lumian noticed that one of the tributaries, regardless of whether it belonged to Franca or Hela, emitted a faint black hue.

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Chapter 703 Fused Ability

□□Black… When it comes to luck, this color signifies they'll face a deadly calamity… If the hue isn't dense, could it mean the calamity is potentially fatal but avoidable—that there's a chance of overcoming it? Yes, I'll watch others going forward. I might spot dense black. Maybe that implies if the corresponding tributary is selected, a deadly fate is sealed… Lumian continued observing Franca and Hela's fates, forming a related hypothesis.

Since the tributaries constantly shifted, Lumian couldn't fully grasp a target's future fate. He could only catch glimpses of a few possibilities. The black "mark" let him pinpoint the critical junctures.

This wasn't covered in the mystical knowledge accompanying a Fate Appropriator's power. Lumian strongly suspected that once Luck Observation evolved into Fate Observation, it could merge with a Reaper's Weakness Investigation to create this unique ability.

It was like exposing a target's physical and spiritual weak points—the tributary leading to their demise!

As I suspected, the Hunter and Inevitability pathways' visual abilities have combined… Lumian used the chance to examine Hela and Franca's fate rivers, realizing he could perceive fragments of their past and present destinies, similar to when he used Fallen Mercury to discern others' fates.

The difference now was that he could see it directly, without extending his spirituality. With the right abilities, he could touch the ethereal river that shimmered with mercury-like ripples, woven from intricate symbols.

Put another way, he could "see" part of a target's fate without their awareness.

Naturally, compared to touching the corresponding fate river through abilities, there were clear limits to relying on eyesight. Most life scenes in the mercury river were quite hazy in such cases. The nearer to the present, the sharper they became. Likewise, the less they involved high-level matters, the clearer they appeared.

Franca and Hela's life scenes presented a vivid, striking contrast in this regard.

Past and present fragments manifesting in Hela's fate river's mercury ripples seemed veiled in fog, while others appeared cloaked in night, making them indiscernible. Only a handful could be perceived. Franca's was far clearer. Especially in the last week or two, Lumian could see everything except scenes with high-level entities like the Evernight Nation, Madam Judgment, and the Demoness of Black.

During his exploratory observation, Lumian was abruptly startled.

After a few seconds, he looked away, unsettled.

"What's the matter?" Franca inquired, curious and concerned. "If you prefer not to disclose your specific abilities, that's fine."

Only then did she realize she had been too eager to ask about the Fate Appropriator's situation and potential abilities in front of Madame Hela.

Lumian couldn't help swallowing hard. Composing himself, he met Hela's gaze.

"There's nothing I can't share.

"I can no longer just observe luck. I can directly perceive the fate river corresponding to each of you. It ranges from the main course to the tributaries, but most is indistinct. I can only clearly detect it when actively using my fate-hunting ability, and there's a time constraint.

"Indeed, among the fate river tributaries I saw, one likely leads to death…"

Lumian succinctly recounted his initial theory, the hue of his eyes gradually normalizing.

"If death isn't inevitable, it should be termed a death calamity," Franca remarked, focusing on the symbolic import of "black."

Death calamity? Lumian and Hela turned to Franca, awaiting clarification.

Franca laughed self-consciously.

"Simply put, if you navigate a catastrophe, crisis, or incident that could cause death, you might emerge alive."

I see… Lumian considered briefly before saying, "Then I'll dub this ability the Eye of Calamity—eyes that can perceive death calamities."

The name mattered little to him. Its utility was paramount.

Lumian then absorbed the mystical knowledge that had entered his body along with a Fate Appropriator's power.

A Fate Appropriator's core actually lay in fate appropriation, split into three abilities.

The first was Fate Appropriation. By touching the target's fate river, he could appropriate and extract the desired fate.

This differed somewhat from Fallen Mercury's abilities. One needn't kill the target to Appropriate their fate, but it required time. The less weighty the corresponding

fate, the quicker the process, and vice-versa.

A fate fragment's weightiness denoted its significance to the target's overall fate.

Naturally, Lumian could also Appropriate a fragment of the target's fate by slaying them. Moreover, the target's overall fate would be locked without further changes. The time to complete the Appropriation was very brief.

As a Fate Appropriator, Lumian could compress two fate fragments within himself, surpassing Fallen Mercury's single one.

Usually, there could be three, but Lumian hadn't been a Dancer or acted as an Alms Monk. He hadn't even signed a full set of special contracts. Meaning, during the Inevitability domain's initial trio of stages, he had seldom neared the power bestower in daily life. The fusion with the powers was comparatively weak.

Had he not cultivated an Ascetic's core spirit, perhaps he could have stored merely one fate fragment.

The second ability was Fate Exchange, where one's accrued fate was traded for a specific fate of the target.

Ideally, the fate fragments' weightiness should match. Light for light, heavy for heavy. If not, the exchange would be quite slow, maybe taking five to six minutes.

The fate fragment's importance was one facet, while its importance to the individual was another. Together, they would influence the exchange speed. Still, generally, it was swifter than directly Appropriating the corresponding fate—

barring Appropriating from a slain target.

Be it Fate Appropriation or Fate Exchange, there were limits barring him from attacking targets until he finished them.

In this respect, it lacked Fallen Mercury's convenience and flexibility.

The third ability was Compelling Fate. It entailed expending an enormous amount of spirituality to directly compel the target's future toward a tributary.

Originally, this ability didn't function this way. It primarily swayed the target's future fate via rituals, curses, and other means. Yet, after fusing with the Reaper trait, it could directly compel fates.

This combination with the Eye of Calamity allowed Lumian to discern certain possibilities.

Naturally, after careful assessment, he deduced his dual spirituality as a Reaper and Fate Appropriator could only permit two compulsions.

A Fate Appropriator's core abilities are the deepening and streamlining of the Luck Transference Spell… Lumian gave an overall appraisal.

Upon becoming a Fate Appropriator, the ceiling of contracts he could withstand as a Contractee had hit twelve. The endurance stemming from being an Ascetic had also risen markedly.

This spurred Lumian to mull signing two to three more contractual abilities down the line to diversify his combat style and bolster his related trump cards.

However, he wouldn't truly sign all twelve, not even ten. That would surpass an Ascetic's endurance. Lumian had no wish to become a pseudo-inferior Beyonder like Padre Guillaume Bénet, whose weaknesses could be readily grasped and actions predicted.

Another notable shift in an Ascetic was the accumulation of external fate fragments. It had genuinely become a vital component of a Fate Appropriator.

As for rituals such as the Animal Creation Spell, they could be streamlined. For instance, Lumian previously had to drape the target with a ritual sheepskin to transform them into sheep by chanting the incantation. Now, he could use a more symbolic sheepskin to cover the other party to meet the prerequisite.

His flexibility as a Dancer had also grown. Lumian could now perform horrific and incredible actions. If ordinary folk merely glimpsed the corresponding shadows he cast, they would deem him a monster.

Furthermore, Lumian's spirituality had climbed substantially. The most basic yardstick was that he could employ up to 17 Spirit World Traversals.

Nonetheless, both a Fate Appropriator and a Reaper had scant impact on his physical prowess.

After verifying his transformation, Lumian thanked Madame Hela and asked when the next Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society meeting would be before returning to the real world with Franca.

Having returned The Fool's gold coin to Jenna, Lumian briefly outlined a Fate Appropriator's abilities and stated,

"Given my ability to directly perceive some fate fragments, I'll settle on the concrete plan after observing Moran Avigny up close."

"Okay." Franca thoroughly endorsed any step that could lessen the risk.

Lumian rose and said to Franca and Jenna,

"I'll head out first then. Don't forget to help me inquire at your mysticism gatherings if there's the Harvest Priest potion formula and the matching Beyonder ingredients."

"Got it." Seeing Lumian off, Franca turned to Jenna, puzzled. "Why is he acting a bit odd? Doesn't he usually rile people up and quip before leaving?"

Jenna also found this atypical and sank into deep thought.

Abruptly, her expression changed.

Jenna glanced down at the book in her hand, saying pensively, "Perhaps he just received the boon's power and isn't in a stable state. He needs to hurry back and rest."

Franca nodded, understanding. "Fair point."

She didn't linger on it or bother to. The night was lovely, and she couldn't squander it on such trivial matters.

…

Avenue du Boulevard, outside the Champs-Élysées' Rose Conference Room.

Numerous reporters stood before the hotel's signature indoor golden fountain, awaiting the arrival of Minister of Industry Moran Avigny, who had finished negotiations with the Loen Kingdom's delegation.

Lumian had switched into a pre-prepared black tweed coat and half top hat. He held a rented, new black-and-white camera without a tripod. With his unremarkable, passerby-

like appearance, he mingled with these individuals as a fake reporter.

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Chapter 704 Fragment of Fate

□□The reporters waiting outside the conference hall displayed no signs of impatience or dissatisfaction, despite the passing time. They were well accustomed to such situations.

At last, the heavy doors of the Rose Conference Hall opened, revealing the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny. Dressed in a sharp formal suit, his dark-gray eyes and chiseled features stood out as he emerged alongside the leader of the Loen Kingdom's delegation.

Snap! Snap! A flurry of loud camera flashes illuminated the scene, and Moran Avigny responded with a graceful wave to the reporters.

Lumian refrained from pushing his way to the front, choosing instead to observe Moran Avigny from a distance, hidden among the crowd.

Shielded by the camera, his azure eyes rapidly shifted to a silver-black hue.

Eye of Calamity!

In Lumian's enhanced vision, a river of mercury materialized on Moran Avigny's body, composed of ethereal water droplets. Each droplet was adorned with intricate, interconnected symbols.

As Moran Avigny delivered a concise speech announcing various industrial cooperation agreements between the Intis Republic and the Loen Kingdom, Lumian meticulously analyzed the Minister of Industry's past, present, and future, uncovering the fragments of fate concealed within each mercurial droplet.

The more distant the past, the greater the ambiguity. Lumian concentrated on the events of the preceding two weeks.

He witnessed Moran Avigny residing in a government-provided villa, attending weekly gatherings at cafés to discuss matters of state, exemplifying Trier's café politics.

Furthermore, Lumian observed Moran Avigny's attendance at salons, balls, banquets, operas, concerts, theaters, and art exhibitions. The Minister indulged in polo, poker, hunting in the suburbs, and flirtations with courtesans. He leveraged his position to secure favors, such as appointing the husband of one of his lovers as the deputy general manager of the Intis Industrial Credit Bank's Southern Continent branch—a coveted role known for its prestige, generous compensation, and influence. The sole drawback was the necessity of leaving Trier for the Southern Continent for two to three years, initially without the companionship of

spouse and children.

These observations aligned perfectly with Lumian's preconceived notions of Trier's elite society.

Amidst the hazy fragments, two particular instances captured Lumian's attention.

In one, Moran Avigny sat alone in his study, perusing a document. Abruptly, he jotted down a note and reached into a nearby mirror. His hand, seemingly incorporeal, passed through the glass surface, depositing the note within.

The other featured Moran Avigny's fleeting encounter with an unfamiliar individual during a hunting excursion in the West Lognes Forest. What piqued Lumian's interest was the thin, white fog enveloping this fragment, rendering it indistinct.

This peculiar obscurity differed from the typical vagueness of most fate fragments.

The first fragment confirmed Moran Avigny's identity as a Mirror Person. Among the 22 paths of the divine, Demonesses proficient in mirror magic could not transmit information or objects through mirrors until attaining the rank of Sequence 4 demigods. If Moran Avigny were a demigod-level Demoness, his existence as a man would be impossible.

Lumian could only surmise two possibilities:

First, Mirror People possessed an innate mastery over mirrors, surpassing even Demonesses in the realm of mirror magic.

Second, Moran Avigny had originally been a Demoness at the demigod level who later consumed a higher Sequence Hunter potion, successfully transforming into a man. This implied that the Minister of Industry was at least a Sequence 3 Saint, if not an Angel.

Considering the intelligence gathered by Franca and the others, the information provided by 007, and the clearer fate fragments, Lumian concluded that Moran Avigny had never exhibited any Hunter-related traits. He was undoubtedly a Mirror Person, albeit an extraordinary one.

The second fate fragment intrigued Lumian due to its relative uniqueness. It might contain crucial information, but deciphering it eluded him for the moment.

Shifting his focus to Moran Avigny's future, Lumian examined the myriad potential fate tributaries.

As anticipated, one tributary bore a faint black tinge.

This mercurial offshoot, like many others, "rehearsed" Moran Avigny's interview and subsequent return to the Ministry of Industry in a private carriage. However, it diverged when, upon entering his office and sitting for a while, Moran Avigny willingly stepped into the full-body mirror near the coat rack and vanished.

Lumian's foresight extended no further.

Based on his observations, Lumian deduced that if Moran Avigny ventured into the mirror world before noon, he would face a life-threatening calamity.

Yet, the probability of Moran Avigny taking such an action was minimal. Among the numerous fate tributaries, only one represented this possibility.

Certainly, if Lumian disregarded the risk of exposure, he could harness nearly half of his spirituality to manipulate Moran Avigny's future, steering it towards that specific tributary. However, such an act would be futile.

Moran Avigny's demise in the mirror world would merely prevent them from accessing his corpse and conducting the spirit channeling ritual.

The Demoness of Black likely possesses the ability to enter the mirror world as well. However, with her as the spirit channeler, obtaining the relevant information would prove impossible. Even if Franca has fully earned her trust, certain knowledge would remain undisclosed until she attains a specific Sequence…
Lumian noticed Moran Avigny's posture signaling the conclusion of the interview, and his bodyguards began navigating through the reporters. Consequently, Lumian ceased using the Eye of Calamity and captured a black-and-white photograph, maintaining his façade.

Subsequently, he gradually retreated from the throng of reporters and made his way to the public washroom. He stashed the camera within his Traveler's Bag, donned Lie, and transformed back into Ciel Dubois. As a guest, he entered the annex restaurant of Champs-Élysées.

Franca awaited him there.

Following the waiter to his designated spot, Lumian noticed a man and a woman engaged in coffee.

The woman possessed black hair, brown eyes, and an alluring beauty. Her attire accentuated her slightly exaggerated aura. The man, by contrast, appeared ordinary, clad in a double-

breasted flannel coat, wrinkled pants, buckled leather boots, and a top hat adorned with soft fur—the favored ensemble of Trier's bankers and financiers in recent times.

Lumian noticed that the man and woman weren't attracted by any aura of wealth. Instead, he recognized the beautiful woman with foreign features.

She, of course, had no knowledge of him. He had only glimpsed her photograph in Ghost Face.

She was Perle, a theater actress from Loen and a courtesan in Trier.

DuVar, the inventor of DuVar's broth and proprietor of the esteemed restaurant, had once lavished a substantial sum on her. He had even attempted suicide because of her, albeit unsuccessfully.

At present, Perle and the middle-aged man, presumed to be a banker, had not yet begun their meal. They were simply savoring their coffee.

The middle-aged man picked up Perle's empty coffee cup and gestured to the grounds, explaining something unknown to Lumian. The courtesan listened intently.

As he passed by, Lumian's keen senses allowed him to briefly eavesdrop. He swiftly grasped that the middle-aged man, believed to be a banker, was immersed in the art of coffee ground divination.

This popular divination method in high society was more akin to a game.

"If the remaining coffee grounds after drinking form a circle, it signifies recent signs of love…"

Upon hearing the middle-aged man's words, Lumian couldn't help but silently critique: Are you going to suggest that you'll be the love she's about to encounter?

Any other woman, even aware of the man's true intentions, would be secretly alarmed by divination results indicating traces of love. They might believe it to be fate's guidance. The various patterns naturally formed by the residual coffee grounds were thought to hold corresponding revelations about one's destiny, a notion widely accepted and impossible to manipulate.

However, given Perle's experience as a seasoned courtesan and her bold demeanor, Lumian had cause to suspect that she had deliberately manipulated the coffee grounds into a circular formation through her drinking technique.

After walking a short distance, Lumian spotted Franca.

The Demoness of Pleasure was dressed as a lady today, perfectly suited for the occasion. Lumian almost failed to recognize her.

Naturally, Franca still refrained from wearing a dress, opting instead for a pantsuit.

Observing Franca's elegantly styled hair, no longer in a ponytail, Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Jenna did your hair for you?"

"Indeed!" Franca responded, not with humiliated rage, but with a sense of smugness.

Before they could delve into their observations, a nearby waiter approached, presenting them with two identical menus.

Lowering her voice, Franca addressed Lumian in ancient Feysac, "The lunch set costs 7 verl d'or. If we order individually and indulge in some decent red wine, the bill for the two of us will amount to at least 50 verl d'or. That sum could easily feed your godson in the market district."

Franca found the restaurant at Grand Champs-Élysées not only expensive but also intriguing.

Switching to Intisian, Franca inquired of the waiter, "Any recommendations?"

The waiter, who had been sneaking glances at Franca, responded eagerly, "Would you like to try the Fürth fish?

"In Trier, apart from certain private banquets, we are the sole establishment that serves Fürth fish."

"What makes it so special?" Lumian asked, curiosity piqued.

Addressing Franca, the waiter explained, "Fürth fish appear semi-charred and can only be found in a specific section of Trier's underground river. Legend has it that long ago, they were ordinary fish. One day, an individual named Fürth caught one and set up a frying pan by the underground river, intending to cook it. Midway through the process, the fish managed to escape the frying pan and return to the river. It survived and spawned numerous descendants, all bearing the semi-charred appearance.

"The skin of this fish is fragrantly browned and oily, yet the flesh within is exceptionally tender…"

Trier's underground river… Half-burnt… Alive… Lumian extracted the keywords and suddenly speculated that this might be a consequence of the leakage of Fourth Epoch Trier's Hunter powers.

Smiling at Franca, he proposed, "Shall we each have one?"

"Very well." Franca had already been contemplating giving it a try.

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Chapter 705 - 705 Past

Glancing around to ensure no one could overhear, he quietly recounted the detailed fate fragments of Moran Avigny. As Franca listened, her expression gradually morphed, a frown creasing her lovely brow.

“That white, thin fog you described… it reminds me of something,” she said. “Does it have a mercurial, ever-shifting nature?”

Lumian considered briefly before nodding. “Yes, it does.”

Franca let out a soft sigh. “It must be the same phenomenon then. You know how I told you about Jenna and I getting tailed by that entrustee of the vanished Deep Valley Cloister gatekeeper at the mysticism gathering? The one we ended up fighting?

“Well, when I channeled the guy’s spirit and asked about his organizational ties, his physical form and spirit abruptly detonated. My mirror cracked from the blast, but right before shattering, it filled with that same thin, mercurial white mist.”

Franca paused, collecting her thoughts.

“According to the intel I passed along, 007 ran into a similar fog during their investigation of Deep Valley Town. Albert Goncourt, the Carbonari’s leader, was spotted there too.

“As you’re aware, the Carbonari played a role in stoking the riots during the Hostel plan. Their other leader, operating under the alias General Philip, spearheaded that particular scheme.”

Lumian swiftly connected the dots Franca was laying out.

“So you suspect the Carbonari is in league with multiple evil god cults, this peculiar white fog being tied to one of them—and that Moran Avigny is also entangled with this group. Meaning our supposedly chance encounter with him in the West Lognes Forest was anything but.”

“Precisely.” Franca took another sip of her liqueur. “And what’s the ultimate endgame for these Mirror People? Surely not mere replacement of their originals.”

The mirror version of Gardner Martin had failed to succeed the real one, understandably using the Hostel plan to deal with his counterpart. But Moran Avigny, also a Mirror Person, had quietly replaced the original for decades, even fathering an illegitimate daughter and living a cushy life. Why collaborate with cults?

Smiling, Lumian replied, “The goals of Mirror People as a whole versus as individuals are bound to differ. Investigating should reveal the former. Back in Fourth Epoch Trier, Mirror Gardner Martin mentioned their loyalty and service to someone who holds all the answers. Learning that person’s identity should tell us the Mirror People’s endgame.”

Franca concurred succinctly, “We can plan our next moves around this strange fog. Deal with Moran Avigny to get more info on the Mirror People, which is already a lead. And capturing him or channeling his spirit could present other opportunities.”

Franca smiled. “Looks like 007 will be busy again.”

Their discussion of Moran Avigny complete, Lumian picked up some roasted pre-meal bread, chewing as he recounted his encounter with Courtesan Perle and the coffee ground divination he’d witnessed.

“She’s unlikely to be a Demoness,” Franca concluded, a hint of disappointment in her voice.

Based on Lumian’s description and reaction to Perle’s appearance, she could tell the courtesan wasn’t a Demoness.

Unless deliberately feigning ugliness, a Demoness’s charms were impossible to conceal. Even gay men couldn’t resist sneaking a few extra glances.

“Definitely not…” Lumian suddenly paused, remembering something.

Shifting to casual conversation, he asked, “Does coffee ground divination actually hold mystical significance? Can it truly provide revelation?”

Franca finished her bread, took another sip of the colorful liqueur, and smiled. “Of course mysticism is involved.”

Noting Lumian’s lack of divination knowledge compared to his skill in reading fate, Franca explained with a smug grin.

“You don’t need to put divination on some holy, unattainable pedestal.

“Our Astral Projections constantly interact with the spirit world, obtaining information and receiving revelations. These get reflected in reality through various forms.

“It’s true for both Beyonders and ordinary people. But those unskilled in divination struggle to proactively obtain revelations or effectively interpret them.

“For example, if a Beyonder chokes on a fishbone while eating, they’ll quickly realize it’s a warning from their spirit, containing a revelation needing interpretation. But if regular folks have the same experience, they’ll just think they were unlucky or careless. It won’t stand out enough to warrant deeper

consideration or deciphering.

“Of course, getting a stuck fishbone doesn’t always indicate a spiritual warning. Usually it’s just lack of care. Skilled diviners can tell the difference between a true revelation and a random occurrence. The unskilled tend to overthink, scaring themselves while ignoring what’s truly concerning.”

Given their upcoming fish course, Franca had used a relatable example.

Lumian nodded, gaining a clearer understanding of divination.

He asked thoughtfully, “So without deliberate control over the drinking method, coffee ground patterns can reveal something—but ordinary people’s interpretations may be inaccurate?”

“Precisely!” Franca said excitedly. “In the most rational environment, the decades-popular coffee ground divination can come extremely close to reality. Each divination session can refine the standard interpretations until the meaning of every ground formation is definitively established. Then even regular people could interpret with reasonable accuracy.

“Sadly, reality is no bastion of pure rationality. Believers in coffee divination subconsciously work to make even mistaken interpretations come true. Non-believers plainly see the interpretations don’t match up. These conflicting approaches get all tangled together, preventing the codification of standard, reliable answers. In the end, it’s just a game.”

As they conversed, the waiter served the various dishes, clearing used plates as part of the set procedure.

The fried Fürth fish arrived as a later main course.
Lumian cut a piece and tasted it—tender flesh with an intriguing blend of charred and oily notes, the pepper and salt seasoning just right.

“Delicious,” Franca praised. “And warming too.”

Lumian also felt a current of warmth spread through him as the Fürth fish reached his stomach.

“Some special ingredients indeed,” he concluded, teasing Franca. “Just don’t eat too fast—wouldn’t want you choking on a bone.”

Franca laughed. “You think a few bones can choke me?”

Glancing around to confirm the waiter’s departure, she asked,

“I’ve been pondering something the last couple days. I still can’t grasp the difference between using rituals and curses to influence a target’s future fate versus directly compelling a fate change.

“I get the ritual part—it relies on the target’s blood, close relatives, certain items, and mystically significant contact to alter their future fate. But how is that different from a curse?”

Lumian organized his thoughts before explaining.

“In the mysticism knowledge of Fate Appropriators, a curse is a curse of fate. Compared to rituals, curses are simpler, with fewer required conditions. But that significantly limits the ultimate effect. Nothing too outlandish can be achieved.

“Many bestowed of Inevitability like to call this type of curse Magnified Fate.

“It can only target fate tributaries within the next ten seconds, and must align with the current environment and circumstances. Meeting those prerequisites enables the fate curse to succeed. And the targeted fate tributary needs a certain probability of manifesting in the first place, or the success rate plummets.

“Simply put, one first uses or alters the environment to enable certain possibilities, then magnifies those possibilities—

assuming they weren’t extremely unlikely to begin with.”

Lumian looked at Franca, raising his right palm to gesture as he mischievously provided an example.

“For instance, while you’re eating fish, I could use a curse to magnify the chance of you choking on a bone. But I couldn’t magnify the chance of your chair suddenly collapsing, impaling you with wood splinters.”

The moment he finished speaking, Franca froze, gasping twice as her throat worked. Within seconds, she spat out a bloody fishbone.

“You actually did it?” Franca grumbled. “Luckily my Sequence grants strong throat control. I handled it myself. Uh…” Franca suddenly paused. After a few seconds, she said, “Otherwise we’d be seeking a doctor’s aid. How embarrassing would that be!”

Lumian chuckled. “I could’ve helped pull it out, magnifying the fate tributary of successful extraction.”

Franca was briefly speechless.

After eating another bite of Fürth fish, she nodded.

“I understand the differences now.

“Curses, or Magnify, suit combat. They’re mainly for interfering with and influencing enemies, not accomplishing anything too exaggerated.

“Rituals are done in advance. With the right items, they can largely steer a target’s fate as desired.”

“But only in a general direction,” Lumian added. “No real precision. I could make someone have a bad day, but not dictate the exact flavor of misfortune.”

Franca nodded.

“So compelling fate is like a streamlined ritual for live combat that still packs a punch?”

“Perhaps even stronger and more precise effects,” Lumian mused. “Plus, many abilities transformed in unique ways when Fate Appropriator and Reaper fused, bringing with them the relevant mystical knowledge. I can’t fully distinguish the inherent from the individualized—I only know the Eye of Calamity and Compelling Fate came from Reaper.”

They enjoyed the rest of their lunch. As the meal concluded, Lumian pointed to the half-eaten Fürth fish, instructing the waiter, “I’d like this wrapped up to go.”

The waiter complied respectfully without question. Franca smiled teasingly. “How frugal of you.”

Lumian chuckled. “This is expected of a godfather. Besides, I’m curious what makes this fish so special.”

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Chapter 706 The Utility of Delicacies

□□In another apartment on Rue Orosay in the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Lumian placed the cold Fürth fish in front of Ludwig.

Ludwig's eyes lit up when he saw the pan-fried fish in the exquisite wooden box. He quickly turned to Lugano, who understood his meaning and handed over a child's knife and fork he had found in the newly rented room.

Lumian leaned back in his chair and watched as Ludwig sliced the remaining half of the fish into pieces, chewing and swallowing the meat along with the bones.

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, Ludwig narrowed his eyes, seemingly enjoying himself, and said, "The Fürth Firefish is a mutated fish resulting from the corruption leaking from Fourth Epoch Trier. Its breed stabilized 769 years ago and mainly resides in the Danro section of the underground Madar River. Its meat and blood can be concocted into a 'warm cocktail' with various sunflowers. After drinking it, one can resist the effects of the cold to a certain extent for half an hour.

"A Fürth Firefish that has lived for over a decade is an ingredient rich in spirituality. Using its meat, blood from a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway, ice, and lemon juice, one can cook Ice Lemon Fish fillets. After anyone eats them for the first time, they permanently enjoy reduced damage from flames. Eating them later will enhance the effect, but it only lasts for half an hour."

Lumian nodded in enlightenment. In Franca's words, the first time it's eaten, it adds some permanent fire resistance. The subsequent enhancements are temporary…

Lugano was taken aback.

Ludwig actually knows cooking?

Moreover, it involves cooking with superpowers!

Can I help him get ingredients rich in spirituality and have him make similar delicacies for me?

It seems capable of permanently enhancing some of my abilities!

After Ludwig finished his meal, Lumian suddenly thought of something.

Franca's ritual for advancing to the Demoness of Affliction involved being burned at the stake—without using a substitute—for fifteen minutes and surviving without going mad.

If Franca eats Fürth Firefish's Ice Lemon Fish fillet to increase her fire resistance, although the pain won't abate, her chances of surviving the incineration will greatly increase. When the time comes, she can eat some more temporarily before the ritual. Lumian's thoughts raced as he quickly made up his mind.

Today, he would head to Underground Trier to search for Fürth Firefish that had lived for over a decade!

From his Traveler's Bag, Lumian retrieved a map of Underground Trier reconstructed from his memories, derived from the one Gardner Martin had once displayed. He searched for the location of the Danro section of the Madar underground river.

As Lumian scrutinized the map, he asked Ludwig with a smile, "How do you know the precise name of the source? Do Fürth Firefish have knowledge of the rivers they inhabit?"

Ludwig licked his lips, unsatisfied.

"Indeed, they do. From years of fishing, humans inevitably mention the names of rivers and specific sections. Even if Fürth Firefish don't comprehend the meaning, they instinctively retain this information in their corresponding cells when repeatedly exposed to it."

"Interesting." Lumian had posed the question in jest, not anticipating such a serious response.

Pointing to himself, he inquired curiously, "Will consuming the Ice Lemon Fish fillet reduce the burn damage I sustain?"

As a Reaper, flames inflict relatively minimal damage to him.

Ludwig picked up a minuscule remnant of the fish, no larger than a grain of rice, from the exquisite wooden box and presented it to Lumian. "Only this much."

Without hesitation, the boy promptly popped the morsel into his mouth.

"Well, that's better than nothing," Lumian remarked with a smile and a sigh.

He intended to secure a special serving of Ice Lemon Fish fillet for himself, with additional portions for Jenna, Anthony, Lugano, and Ludwig!

To accomplish this task, Lumian proactively inquired, "How does a Fürth Firefish that has lived for over a decade differ from its ordinary counterparts?"

Ludwig's response sounded as if he were reciting from a textbook, "A Fürth Firefish that has survived for more than a decade can grow to nearly a meter in length and tends to reside in caves at the riverbed. They rarely approach the surface but exhibit a keen sensitivity to blood and spiritually rich food. These fish are highly aggressive and willing to take significant risks driven by their instincts.

"Their skin has hardened, rendering them impervious to fishing spears. Sharp teeth fill their mouths, enabling them to devour any humans who happen to fall into the river. Additionally, their blood possesses a distinct burning characteristic."

After attentively listening, Lumian calmly assessed the information.

Despite their longevity of over a decade, Fürth Firefish did not possess Beyonder characteristics or acquire supernatural abilities through boons. They belonged to a species that had undergone corruption but had since stabilized.

If they were to continue living in such an environment for tens of thousands of years, they might evolve into creatures with their own intricate society, akin to the Batings Black Insect.

As he put away the map and stood up, Lumian turned to Ludwig and asked thoughtfully before leaving,

"Apart from the permanent enhancements, does this special cooking method involve any adverse effects, such as corruption?"

Ludwig scrutinized Lumian and remained silent. Lumian suspected that Ludwig was internally mocking him.

For someone already deeply corrupted, the concern over a minuscule amount of additional corruption seemed trivial.

After a brief pause, Ludwig replied, "As a child, I lack understanding of such matters. What I do know is that if one desires to indulge in finer and more delectable cuisine, they must be willing to accept the associated risks. Those unwilling to take the risk can simply choose not to partake…"

Ludwig instinctively added, "If you don't wish to eat, you can always leave the food for me."

With a slight nod, Lumian opened the door and exited the apartment.

…

In the depths of Underground Trier, the Madar River flowed through a tranquil, deserted, and dimly lit cave, its gentle splashing echoing in the distance.

Emerging from the shadows, Lumian, Franca, and Jenna made their way to the riverbank. One carried a carbide lamp, while the other two traveled empty-handed.

Although ingredient suppliers seeking to monopolize Fürth Firefish guarded this section of the subterranean river, it posed no significant challenge for a Hunter and two Demonesses. Utilizing the shadows, they deftly navigated through the patrolled area and successfully reached the water's edge.

Raising his carbide lamp, Lumian discovered that the underground river was not only expansive but also incredibly deep. Submerged caves lined the riverbed, inhabited by peculiar fish.

After a quick survey, Lumian set the carbide lamp down, rolled up his sleeves, and crouched beside the river.

Without hesitation, he plunged his right arm into the frigid water.

"Is this your preferred method of fishing?" Franca inquired, well aware of Lumian's penchant for "fishing." However, she hadn't anticipated him employing the same technique when his prey was, quite literally, fish.

"What alternative do I have?" Lumian chuckled. "Would you prefer I strip down, dive into the underwater caves, and catch them with my bare hands?"

"That's not an impossibility," Franca replied with a playful smile. "It would provide an excellent opportunity to admire your physique."

Ignoring her comment, Lumian focused his spirituality, causing a thin layer of white flames to emanate from his thumb.

The flames, resistant to the water's extinguishing effect, took the form of a small knife and carefully sliced his index finger. A single drop of blood seeped out, rapidly dispersing into the surrounding water.

The Fürth Firefish swimming in the shallows seemed to detect an ominous presence and swiftly retreated from the area where the blood had spread.

Moments later, enormous Fürth Firefish, their skin charred and hardened, emerged from the caves along the riverbed.

One particularly swift specimen reached Lumian's right hand in a flash, its mouth wide open to reveal sharp, gleaming teeth. Before it could sink its teeth into his flesh, Lumian's palm abruptly clenched into a fist. Instead of withdrawing, he thrust his hand forward, punching directly into the fish's gaping maw.

With a resounding bang, Lumian grasped the creature's skull and hauled the colossal Fürth fish out of the river.

Silently, cold and sinister black flames ignited in the river, incinerating Lumian's blood that had merged with the water.

It was Jenna.

"We can return now," Lumian declared, tossing the massive Fürth fish to Franca.

As Franca caught the ingredient, freezing it and storing it in her Traveler's Bag, she appeared lost in thought.

Keenly observing her demeanor, Lumian asked, "What's on your mind?"

Pointing in a specific direction, Franca responded, "I remember that nearby, we entered a unique mirror world and acquired the classic silver mirror that granted Anthony and me access to Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Indeed," Lumian acknowledged, gesturing for Franca to continue.

Averting her gaze, Franca expressed her thoughts, "I'm contemplating whether we could utilize the mirror world to stage an ambush against Moran Avigny. Specifically, I'm referring to the conventional mirror world that interconnects all the mirrors in this world."

In the conventional sense, the mirror world functioned more akin to a conceptual amalgamation of doors rather than a tangible realm. It served as an intricate network of passageways linking various mirrors and enigmatic lands. In essence, if Franca could harness the mirror world and pinpoint the precise location, she could conceal herself behind the mirror frequently used by Moran Avigny and launch an attack the moment her target entered.

"What is it that you truly wish to convey?" Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Franca eagerly elaborated, "Considering that a portion of the corruption from Fourth Epoch Trier has seeped into this area, giving rise to unique creatures like Fürth Firefish and the extraordinary mirror world we previously explored, is it plausible that within this vast underground expanse, there exists a secluded corner influenced by the corruption of a select few high-level Demoness powers over an extended period?

"Could it be possible for one to traverse through the mirror and enter the mirror world without attaining the status of a demigod Demoness?"

After a moment of serious contemplation, Lumian replied, "It's a possibility."

Jenna's eyes darted around as she suggested, "Could it be the location where you discovered the special mirror? That area must have been corrupted by the power emanating from Fourth Epoch Trier's mirror world."

"We can investigate," Lumian said with a smile. "There's no need to rush. If it proves unsuccessful, we can bide our time. Once Hisoka's Beyonder characteristic is transformed into a Sealed Artifact, perhaps we can assume the form of Wraiths and conceal ourselves within the mirror. However, I'm uncertain whether Wraiths possess the ability to navigate the mirror world."

"Let's prioritize the search!" Franca declared, retrieving her Mirror World Fragment. She hoped that this item might provide some unique means of detection.

Lumian glanced at the fragment and, after a brief contemplation, advised seriously, "Holding the Mirror World Fragment is unlikely to yield any benefit.

Instead, take out the Primordial Demoness figurine."

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Chapter 707 Compulsion

□□In the dark, silent tunnel, Franca advanced slowly, holding the Primordial Demoness figurine made of bone. Her footsteps were so soft they were nearly inaudible.

Lumian, clutching his carbide lamp, and Jenna trailed silently behind her.

With a Hunter's keen understanding of the terrain and memories, the three had finished exploring the area where they had obtained the classic silver mirror. They had even expanded their search to include the nearby underground tunnels and connected quarry caves.

However, the Primordial Demoness figurine showed no abnormal reactions, and neither Franca nor Jenna sensed anything out of the ordinary.

Franca sighed. "Well, this is disappointing. Bold assumptions leading to a shameful failure!"

She had no intention of giving up, but wanted to return to the surface first and contact 007. She hoped to use the authorities' detailed records of underground abnormalities to search for any areas where a high-level Demoness's power might be seeping out.

Having experienced numerous mystical incidents, Lumian surveyed the area, pondering for a few seconds.

"Let's investigate again. This time, I'll extinguish the carbide lamp.

"In mysticism, Demonesses and the mirror world are always associated with darkness, evil, and quiet depth. Perhaps subtle reactions can occur in the absence of light."

"Subtle reactions… What is this, a chemistry experiment?" Franca scoffed, but chose to comply. She turned to Jenna. "Hold your Mirror World Fragment in your hand. If we're giving this a shot, we should try everything."

Jenna took out the Mirror World Fragment she had obtained from the Tamara family tomb, and Lumian turned the switch to extinguish the carbide lamp.

The silent tunnel plunged into absolute darkness. As a Hunter, Lumian couldn't see a thing.

"You can hold onto my sleeve," Jenna suggested calmly. "Or activate your Spirit Vision and follow our spiritual light."

Lumian replied with a smile, "That would make me look weak. I suspect you're deliberately showing off. Have you forgotten? I can gain night vision by changing my life form."

Jenna was silent for a moment before retorting, "Dammit! Would it kill you to be a bit nicer about it?"

"She's right," Franca agreed. "Jenna was just trying to help. It's fine if you don't want her assistance, but there's no need to mock her."

"That's a Hunter for you." Lumian chuckled as he activated the black mark on his body, transforming into a shadow creature.

He blended into the shadows and followed Franca and Jenna as they explored the area for the second time.

As Franca passed a corner of a quarry cave, she suddenly felt the bone figurine in her hand tremble slightly.

"There's a reaction! There's a reaction!" she exclaimed joyfully.

Lumian immediately left the shadows, transforming back into human form, his blue eyes tinged with silver-black.

In the absolute darkness, he saw the mercury rivers of fate belonging to Franca and Jenna.

As his spirituality rapidly depleted from the brief observation, Lumian found a possibility among the tributaries symbolizing Franca's future fate.

This was something that might happen in ten seconds or more. Furthermore, the probability of it occurring was extremely low—something Curse, or rather, Magnify, couldn't influence.

Without hesitation, Lumian extended his right palm toward Franca.

Franca, with her night vision, witnessed his actions and noticed his silver-black eyes. She jumped in fright.

"W-what are you doing?"

She didn't dodge, fully trusting Lumian.

Lumian roused his spirituality, transforming it into a violent illusory river that surged out of his palm.

Franca's fate was instantly thrust into a future by the mighty torrent.

Compelling Fate!

Franca suddenly had an idea.

"Are you influencing my future, allowing me to successfully utilize the corrupted fate fragments here to make it a reality?

"Dammit, I really do have an idea. Maybe I should give it a try!"

Lumian, his spirituality greatly depleted, chuckled. "Life is short, why not give it a try?"

"…" Franca could clearly detect the mockery in his tone. She gritted her teeth. "I'll deal with you later!"

As she spoke, Franca placed the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine on a protruding rock in a corner of the mine. Then she took out a mirror and placed it in front of the figurine.

Lumian conjured a blazing white fireball and observed as Franca retrieved essential oils, extracts, perfume, and herbal powder from her Traveler's Bag, preparing for the ritual.

Uh… Lumian turned to Jenna, who happened to look back at him.

Franca simultaneously turned to face them.

The three were taken aback for a moment before bursting into laughter.

"You two thought of it too?" Franca said happily. "Jenna shouldn't stay here. The Primordial Demoness might cast Her gaze here later."

As a pure female Demoness, it would definitely not bode well for Jenna to be noticed by the Primordial Demoness. It could even mean death.

Lumian replied with a smile, "I'll send Jenna back first and come back after the ritual."

With that, he reached out and grabbed Jenna's shoulder.

Jenna said to Franca, "Be careful."

"Don't worry, I'm a skilled worker," Franca replied, waving her hand cheerfully.

As a member of the Demoness Sect, she regularly prayed to the Primordial Demoness through the bone figurine, following the Demoness of Black's instructions. Occasionally, she even held a solo Mass.

Of course, this was the first time she would be praying to the Primordial Demoness through a ritual.

After Lumian teleported away with Jenna, the quarry cave returned to darkness.

With the bone figurine, Franca decided to use a dualistic ritual.

After lighting the candle representing herself, she drew her needs on a faux goatskin with the corresponding symbols and patterns, drawing upon her extensive mysticism knowledge.

Following that, she sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality. She dripped rose essential oil, musk, and perfume into the candle flame.

Franca's heart skipped a beat as the alluring, complex scent quickly entered her nostrils. She couldn't help but inhale deeply.

After completing all the preparations, Franca took two steps back and recited the Primordial Demoness's honorific name in Hermes.

"The source of all catastrophes, the symbol of destruction and the apocalypse, the Demoness who controls Chaos."

In the altar, a small amount of moss suddenly grew, entangling into vines that rose high, as if staring at Franca.

The ground softened, and a frigid wind blew, causing Franca to tremble.

Simultaneously, Franca sensed the fragrance in the area grow sweeter, carrying a warm charm that made her blush.

This invigorated her specific desires, and charming scenes surfaced in her mind.

Suppressing the heat in her body and shaking off her discomfort, Franca briefly recounted how Moran Avigny was a Mirror Person and how she wanted to capture him. Then, following the ritual's standard procedure, she said,

"I pray for the power of the mirror.

"I pray for the power of chaos.

"I pray for God's protection.

"I pray for a fixed entrance to the mirror world to appear here.

"Roses, a herb that belongs to the Demoness, please pass your power to my incantation.

"Musk, a herb that belongs to the Demoness, please pass your power to my incantation…"

After reciting the incantation, Franca ignited the faux goatskin and placed it on the mirror in front of the bone figurine.

As the faux goatskin burned away, Franca felt the candle flame dim, as if a layer of translucent mullioned glass had materialized around it.

A strange power was activated, gathering in the mirror.

The human-head-sized mirror suddenly darkened, turning shadowy and illusory.

It melded with the protruding rock where the figurine was placed and vanished.

In the next moment, the candle flame returned to normal, and the fragrance lingering in the air still unsettled Franca. Her thoughts raced, requiring immense strength to control herself.

After tidying up the bone figurine and other items, Franca took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

Dammit, just the charm and pleasure emanating from the ritual nearly made me lose myself. All I wanted was to approach the source of the charm and enjoy the pleasures bestowed by Her.

As expected of the Primordial Demoness who controls pleasure and feminine charm…

Dammit! I'm an idiot. Why did I take a deep breath? The smell here hasn't dissipated!

I need to quickly confirm if there's an entrance to the mirror world before heading back to Jenna…

As these thoughts raced through Franca's mind, she saw Lumian's figure swiftly materialize at the edge of the quarry cave.

Franca jumped in fright. "Why are you back already?"

Lumian chuckled. "You're in pretty good shape. Didn't I say I'd return after your ritual…?"

As he spoke, Lumian noticed Franca's lake-blue eyes rippling under the dim candlelight, as if they could captivate one's soul.

Lumian's words faltered.

After a brief pause, he added, "Besides, Jenna was worried about you and asked me to come check on you.

"I believe the Primordial Demoness can understand that a Demoness of Pleasure has a friend who cares about her."

"Yeah." Franca nodded gently, bit her lip, and pointed at the protruding rock. "That spot seems to have become a fixed entrance to the mirror world. Let's see if we

can enter."

Lumian didn't inquire further. He approached the protruding rock and, together with Franca, extended his right palm, pressing it against the cold stone.

A faint light flickered, and the two vanished on the spot.

After a brief moment of vertigo, a dark, illusory path appeared before Lumian and Franca's eyes. Surrounding them were numerous similar "tunnels," intertwining to form a complicated and mysterious colossal spiderweb.

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Chapter 708 Remnant Influence

□□Is this an ordinary mirror world? Lumian gazed at the dark, illusory paths around him that resembled a mosquito landing on a complicated spiderweb. For some reason, he felt a surge of fear, as if a colossal, warped, pitch-black spider could crawl out from the depths of this strange land at any moment and drag him and Franca into the darkness that symbolized destruction.

"Is every illusory path connected to a mirror?" Franca's voice suddenly echoed in Lumian's ears, so close he could hear her breathing.

Simultaneously, Lumian caught a whiff of a warm, sweet fragrance. His blood vessels inexplicably pulsed, and his body and mind relaxed slightly.

At some point, Franca had moved to his side, her eyes flickering as she surveyed their surroundings.

Lumian nodded slightly. "In theory, yes."

"No!" Franca rejected her speculation. "They might also be connected to some mysterious alternate space."

"That's right…" Lumian recalled his understanding of the mirror world.

He exhaled and took a step forward.

"I believe those situations should also be connected to mirrors, mirrors that belong to those mysterious alternate spaces."

Without waiting for Franca's response, he pointed at the dark illusory path ahead and said,

"Before understanding the mirror world's coordinates and location, recklessly traversing this place is likely very dangerous. If we're lucky, we might only end up at the wrong mirror and have no choice but to return to the real world. If we're unlucky, we'll reach a mirror representing a dangerous place. When we leave, we'll have to face terrifying enemies. If we're super unlucky…"

At this point, Lumian paused.

Franca squeezed to his side and asked in a soft voice, "What happens if we're super unlucky?"

"W-we'll vanish from this mirror world forever. We won't be seen alive, and if we're dead, our corpses will go missing." Lumian composed himself and took

another step forward.

All of a sudden, he sensed the dark, illusory path morph into a massive vortex, tugging him into its depths.

Franca experienced a comparable sensation, her spirituality sending her a powerful warning.

They both stepped back in unison, evading the absorption of the fearsome vortex.

"How treacherous," Franca sighed. "Just getting close to these illusory paths without going further can make you plummet into an unknown mirror. Maybe we can only count on the luck of Winners in a situation like this. Let's hope our destination isn't too terrible. Uh, your Magnify or Compelling Fate abilities should come in handy."

Lumian nodded.

"I initially thought the mirror world was closely tied to the spirit world, and teleportation would work here too. But from what I can see, while there is a connection, it's not strong enough to enable my teleportation. It's not that I can't teleport, but it's way too risky. There's nearly a 100% chance of getting lost.

"Without comprehending the abilities associated with the mirror world, I don't suggest using this place to ambush Moran Avigny, unless we're aided by a high-level Demoness or a high-level Apprentice."

Noticing Franca nod pensively, Lumian sighed in relief and intentionally taunted, "Have you recovered?"

"Huh?" Franca was startled momentarily before her embarrassment morphed into anger. "What other option do I have? When I use a ritual to seek aid from the Primordial One, I'm inevitably impacted. Sometimes I'm lured, sometimes I'm in pain, and sometimes I'm dejected, as if I've temporarily developed a mental disorder. Sometimes I go rigid for a while, as if I've been petrified…"

Since officially joining the Demoness Sect, the Demoness of Black had shared extensive mysticism knowledge with Franca, particularly concerning prayers to the Primordial Demoness.

On such topics, the Demoness of Black explained: As the ritual's host, the ritual itself granted a degree of protection. The extent to which she was influenced by the Primordial One's overflowing presence was quite minimal. Once the ritual concluded, she would recover after withstanding it for ten to twenty seconds. The only thing to watch out for was the desires arising from their typical reaction to being entranced by the Primordial One. Their fading would be comparatively gradual, but what Demoness didn't have numerous lovers? There was no need to be overly concerned about this.

The longer Franca talked, the more forceful she became, even a tad aggrieved.

"That's a genuine deity. How can I possibly resist a genuine deity's overflowing influence?

"If I weren't the ritual's host, I would've been unable to restrain myself and would've unleashed my primal instincts."

Franca couldn't suppress a chuckle at the reference to her primal nature.

Within the mirror world, she had consistently called the Primordial Demoness the Primordial One to prevent blasphemy.

After pondering for a moment, Lumian replied, "Praying to a different genuine deity won't lead to anything comparable unless someone present is blasphemous."

"It's the Primordial One's fault for being in such a terrible state." Franca had already come up with the justification. "Don't assume you can withstand it simply because you're an Ascetic. If you had been there and not the ritual's host, I would've witnessed your primal nature erupt."

At this juncture, she appraised Lumian and grinned.

"It's not like you didn't react. Were you worried you couldn't restrain yourself, so you purposely exposed me and created an awkward situation?"

Subconsciously, Franca's breathing turned labored again.

Lumian scoffed.

"When I got there, the scene's lingering effects hadn't fully dissipated, and a peculiar fragrance permeated the air. That was a genuine deity. How could I withstand even the tiniest bit of a genuine deity's overflowing influence?"

He echoed Franca's words.

"Really? Is it merely due to the lingering aroma?" Franca's lake-blue eyes narrowed menacingly, as if challenged.

The aqueous light in her eyes resurfaced, glittering like shards of sunlight.

Lumian exhaled and stepped to the side, grasping Franca's upper arm.

"I'll send you back first. Jenna is waiting for you."

"We're heading back already?" Franca asked, surprised. "Won't you explore the mirror world further and consider how to utilize this place?"

"I have a plan." Lumian tugged Franca away from the illusory tunnel's spiderweb-like darkness.

As they returned to the quarry cave, Franca, her focus diverted, inquired, "What plan?"

While Lumian tried to activate the black mark on his right shoulder, he responded impassively, "Contract ability."

He intended to establish a contract with a Beyonder creature possessing a mirror world traversal ability to acquire the corresponding characteristics!

Regardless, he hadn't determined which three abilities to contract this time. This could be one of them.

"You're right, a contract ability…" Franca was thrilled.

She then noticed Lumian was still motionless. Comprehending, she murmured into his ear, "Didn't you want to teleport? Why haven't we departed? Does your Spirit World Traversal activation always take this long, or are you enduring something?"

As Franca completed her sentence, the pair vanished from the gloomy quarry cave.

…

That evening, in Lumian's rented apartment, the nearly one-

meter-long Fürth Firefish was set on the dining table. Ludwig used a child's table knife to break through the charred and tough fish skin, cutting the fair fish meat into pieces.

Lumian glanced at Franca, who had donned a light-colored hunting suit, and noticed the Demoness of Pleasure's gaze was elusive, brimming with embarrassment.

She appeared to be lamenting: Kill me! This is too mortifying. I don't want to live anymore!

Lumian, who had been feeling slightly embarrassed himself, smiled.

He mouthed to Franca,

"Post-nut clarity is truly remarkable."

Despite Franca's inability to lip-read, she still sensed Lumian's ridicule.

Pleasure is detrimental! Pleasure is detrimental! Irrespective of gender, when thoughts of pleasure dominate one's mind, one will invariably engage in various actions that result in their own ruin!

How humiliating!

I don't want to live!

In that instant, Franca longed for a crevice in the ground to conceal herself.

Anthony, sitting silently at the dining table, glanced at Lumian, then at Franca, before looking away.

At last, Ludwig removed the inedible parts and sliced the fish fillets into three soup pots.

Franca sealed one of the pots with ice and stored it in her Traveler's Bag for later use. Ludwig slid the other one to Lugano and spoke in a childish tone, "Can we have fish fillet and clam cream broth tonight?"

"Sure," Lugano promptly agreed.

He made an effort to avert his gaze from Franca and Jenna, the two Demonesses, believing it was disrespectful to his boss.

From his viewpoint, these two Demonesses were probably the boss's lovers.

He couldn't help but marvel inwardly.

As expected of the boss. He really has Demonesses as his lovers, and there are two of them!

Back then, Emperor Roselle only had one.

After adding a generous amount of lemon juice to the pot of fish fillets, Ludwig slid them toward Lumian.

His intention was evident. He required the blood of a Mid-

Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway.

"How much do you need?" Lumian inquired.

"Enough to stir it up," Ludwig replied, acting as if this was the bare minimum.

Jenna frowned and asked, "How much does each person need to eat to gain that permanent effect?"

Ludwig answered innocently, "Different physiques and Sequences need different quantities. You'll only find out when you actually eat it."

Lumian raised his eyebrows and poured the rest of Gardner Martin's blood into the soup pot.

Noticing it was still insufficient, he used a ritual silver dagger to slice his hand and dripped 20 to 30 milliliters of blood into it.

Ludwig observed with anticipation.

"Aren't you concerned about corruption?" Lumian asked with a smirk.

Ludwig shook his head. "The quantity here isn't substantial."

Franca tried her best to act normally and remarked with amusement, "Discussing toxicity without considering dosage is just playing the rogue."

"Indeed." Ludwig concurred with Franca and stirred the fish slices in the soup with a spoon.

Gradually, the tender-white fish soaked up the seemingly searing blood, and the fish slowly started to brown.

"Add some ice," Ludwig instructed Franca and Jenna.

The two Demonesses rose in unison and extended their hands toward the soup pot.

Drops of white frost condensed and descended like rain, noticeably slowing the browning of the fish until it ceased.

Ludwig leaped off his chair and dashed into the kitchen, returning with a few silver plates. He distributed seven to eight Ice Lemon Fish fillets to each of them.

"Is that all?" Jenna asked with a surprised smile.

"If it's not enough, you can have two or three more," Ludwig replied earnestly.

Jenna instinctively wanted to say something, but she refrained when she saw Ludwig's childlike demeanor.

She pointed at their plates and said, "Did you request so much of Lumian's blood just to eat such a small portion of the fish?

"Why not prepare less and save the remaining half of the pot for tomorrow?"

Ludwig hugged the soup pot in front of him and shouted, "Mine!"

"…" Jenna suddenly felt like a witch stealing candy from a child.

He's definitely abusing his power… Lumian glanced at Ludwig and shook his head in amusement. "At least you have some sense when it comes to food."

With that, Lumian polished off all the Ice Lemon Fish fillets on his plate.

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Chapter 709 "Chef"

□□The sour lemon flavor, tender fish texture, scorching aroma, and subtle sweetness with hints of fish and oil burst forth in Lumian's mouth. The taste exceeded his expectations.

He had anticipated dishes like this would be unpalatable and jarring, similar to a potion, but he never thought they would be considered delicious.

When given a choice, Ludwig has a genuine preference for delicacies and doesn't fool himself… Lumian chewed and swallowed the seven or eight fish slices.

A mild burning sensation spread from his throat to his stomach, reminiscent of drinking a glass of liquor.

The sensation quickly faded, and nothing unusual happened.

"That's it? It worked?" Lumian glanced at Ludwig.

Ludwig shook his head.

"Give it another two to three minutes for your stomach to absorb it."

"So fast?" Franca asked, surprised.

She respected mysticism, but having taken potions before, she knew they worked instantaneously. Ludwig's delicacies, however, seemed to require digestion and absorption by the stomach, contradicting how the organ typically functioned.

Plus, the stomach didn't absorb everything!

Ludwig responded seriously, "A Chef's creations can be rapidly absorbed by the stomach."

Chef… Lumian nodded, deep in thought.

He remembered Ludwig frequently commenting on various things like a food connoisseur.

Without further explanation, Ludwig buried his face in the soup pot before him and polished off the remaining Ice Lemon Fish fillets.

Jenna and the others promptly finished the fish slices on their own plates.

Two minutes later, Lumian felt his body growing warm, with a tingling sensation in his skin and flesh.

The effect on him was minimal. It paled in comparison to drinking a potion, let alone the pain of burning himself with flames.

Soon, Lumian returned to normal, his expression unaltered.

He glanced playfully at Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, waiting to see how the Ice Lemon Fish fillet would affect them.

A minute later, Jenna and the others suddenly flushed, as if they had eaten incredibly spicy food from the Feynapotter Kingdom highlands.

"Hiss…" Lugano let out a pained gasp, feeling a searing sensation in his breath.

Originating from within his body, he couldn't have treated it even if he wanted to.

Frost enveloped Franca's body, seemingly trying to soothe the pain in her skin and flesh.

It was futile.

Jenna and Anthony grimaced but made no unnecessary movements. They bore the discomfort, waiting for the Ice Lemon Fish fillet to finish transforming their bodies.

This lasted for ten to twenty seconds before the quartet's expressions relaxed.

"How does it feel?" Lumian asked with a smile.

Franca instinctively recalled the sensation and said, "It was like every inch of my skin and flesh had been burned. Hmm, not quite that intense—relatively mild…"

While speaking, she took a matchbox from her Traveler's Bag and experimentally lit two matches. She held them to the back of her left hand for a bit.

Franca's expression gradually contorted. She endured the pain in her left hand momentarily before pulling it back and shaking it.

The matchbox fell to the ground.

"It still hurts!" Franca reported the experiment results to Lumian and Jenna through gritted teeth.

Ludwig hastily replied, "It doesn't reduce pain."

"How's the wound?" Jenna asked, concerned.

Franca immediately checked the back of her left hand, seeing only slight burn marks on her pale skin with minimal physical damage.

"It works, even though the flame temperature wasn't that high, to begin with…" Franca's expression eased.

Across the dining table, Anthony carefully considered his words before saying, "I think I'm a bit more irritable than usual, but within reasonable limits."

Jenna added, "I'm grumpy too, but not drastically."

Franca and Lugano confirmed experiencing the same thing.

Swallowing the Ice Lemon Fish fillet, Ludwig explained, "That's to be expected. Effectiveness comes with corruption."

Jenna and Franca turned to Lumian.

Lumian spread his hands, smiling. "I don't feel any different."

For him, the Ice Lemon Fish fillet's corruption was negligible.

Franca wasn't sure whether to feel envious or sympathetic. After a moment's thought, she said, "This is like a milder version of being a Contractee—tolerating certain negative effects in exchange for corresponding Beyonder traits. Sure, the effects are noticeably weaker, but the upside is it's passive. Plus, the negative effects are minimal.

"Going forward, when you get similar ingredients, you need to clarify the permanent and negative effects. You can't just eat everything. Choices have to be made. Otherwise, things can easily go wrong."

Lumian glanced at Ludwig and said, "That depends on the individual."

Maybe a Chef, or the Gourmet pathway, had Sequences that mitigated the corresponding impact, akin to Alms Monks and Ascetics who were Contractees.

Franca grasped Lumian's implication and continued excitedly,

"Dishes and concoctions without permanent effects are like various Apothecary pathway agents.

"I've always envied Contractees. I wanted the freedom to mix and match abilities, creating a unique character build. Now, without accepting an evil god's boon, I finally have a chance, albeit a diluted one."

Jenna's heart raced, and the two Demonesses gazed at Ludwig, eyes shining.

To them, he was no longer the gluttonous monster child Lumian had described, but a Beyonder chef deserving of their care and attention.

Ludwig concentrated on eating the leftover Ice Lemon Fish fillet, not reacting further.

…

In a quarry cave in Underground Trier.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony stood beyond the spirituality wall, observing Lumian conduct the ritual to acquire new contract abilities.

Having thoroughly reviewed Madam Magician's information on spirit world entities and possessing the strange creature knowledge granted by the boon, Lumian swiftly identified two potential contract targets with mirror travel abilities.

The first was a spirit world being called Bloody Jack. According to the information, in the Loen Kingdom's south, some mysticism enthusiasts and folklore academics were playing a divination game when they spotted a blurry figure in the mirror wielding a large axe, drenched in blood. This figure would emerge from the mirror, assaulting and slaughtering everyone present.

The second was the Daratra Diamond Maggots, mentioned in the Contractee's mysticism knowledge. They could grant Mirror Traversal in exchange for sacrificing a crystallized meteorite. The drawback was that one's body would become denser and shorter.

Lumian undeniably wanted to summon Bloody Jack but wasn't certain if it possessed an ability akin to Mirror Traversal.

Gazing at the three lit candles, Lumian stepped back twice and chanted in ancient Hermes, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I beseech your shelter.

"I pray for your attention.

"I!

"In the name of the great Fool, I summon:

"The peculiar creature that wanders about the unfounded, the slaughterer hidden in the mirror, Jack from the bloody world…"

The bluish-black candle flame instantly swelled, forming an illusory door adorned with enigmatic patterns amidst the pervasive, eerie gray mist.

The door gradually opened, and darkness poured out, engulfing the mirror Lumian had placed on the altar.

The mirror abruptly levitated, pointing directly at Lumian. Within, an indistinct figure in a blood-stained old jacket dragged a massive axe.

Opening his mouth, Lumian made his throat and chest resonate as he spoke the Mystical Language of Fate.

Silver-black words akin to symbols materialized in midair, descending onto the faux goatskin at the altar's edge, forming a concise and ominous contract.

Upon the contract's formation, Lumian connected with Bloody Jack, comprehending its abilities and traits. He "listened" to its demands.

Bloody Jack possessed three mirror-related abilities and traits, which Lumian named Mirror Mark, Mirror Concealment, and Mirror Traversal.

Mirror Marks could invisibly mark a mirror, inverted from reality, to pinpoint a target. Mirror Concealment allowed the user to hide within the dark tunnels, avoiding being pulled into another mirror. Mirror Traversal enabled swift passage through the illusory tunnels.

Bloody Jack's demand was the sacrifice of 99 living humans.

Lumian pondered briefly, concluding that Mirror Mark was the optimal choice. Locating targets was paramount, and Mirror Traversal could be substituted with Spirit World Traversal. Rapid travel wasn't essential when he could arrive directly.

His eyes suddenly glinted silvery-black, mirroring Bloody Jack's river of fate.

He wasn't seeking information about Bloody Jack. Instead, under the ritual's protection, he aimed to verify something.

After a quick observation, Lumian switched to ancient Hermes and asked Bloody Jack, "Can I alter the request?"

He was unsure if Bloody Jack would comprehend or respond, but asking was harmless. If not, he would have to write to Madam Magician, inquiring about other suitable mirror entities.

Having asked, Lumian immediately employed Magnified Fate, gaining a sharper view of Bloody Jack's fate for the next ten seconds.

Feigning nervousness, he moved his right hand as if to touch his face.

He Magnified a fate tributary!

Two to three seconds later, Bloody Jack's thoughts reached Lumian through the connection forged by the Mystical Language of Fate.

"Pull me out of the mirror!"

Lumian raised his eyebrows and stepped forward twice, extending his right hand toward the mirror hovering above the altar.

The moment his finger touched the glass mirror, he felt it dissolve into nothingness.

As Lumian fully inserted his palm into the mirror, a cold, damp, and distinctly sticky hand abruptly grasped his wrist.

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Chapter 710 "Communication"

□□Lumian wasn't surprised when his wrist was grabbed by the wet hand.

He even chuckled. "Not bad. You only stained my wrist, not corrupt my entire arm."

As he spoke, he pulled back with all his might, feeling the abnormally heavy force opposing him.

Lumian's muscles swelled, and his body appeared to grow slightly larger.

At last, he saw the bloody figure in the jacket being dragged out of the empty mirror.

A bluish-black mist materialized, permeating the faux goatskin containing the ominous contract.

The contract burst into flames on its own, morphing into silver-black symbols and words. They linked together from end to end, creating an intricate and illusory pattern that abruptly passed through his clothes and settled between Lumian's chest and abdomen.

Having pulled Bloody Jack out of the mirror, Lumian had fulfilled the other party's request, and the contract was automatically fulfilled!

At that instant, Bloody Jack, who had regained his footing in front of the altar, raised his head.

His mutilated face turned towards Lumian as he lifted the blood-dripping axe with both hands.

Lumian's eyes, tinged with an iron-black hue, mirrored a two-toned figure of Bloody Jack.

One was a vivid red, enveloping every crevice of Bloody Jack's body, permeating every inch of space. The other was a pale white, no larger than a thumb. It was located at Bloody Jack's abdomen, enveloped by layers of bright red.

Much like Padre Cali in his untransformed Wraith state, he has only one vulnerability from head to toe, but it's not in his Spirit Body; it's concealed within his physical form… This seems to be composed of viscous blood. Regardless of the extent of damage or blood loss it endures, as long as the core remains unharmed, it will be unaffected… It bears some resemblance to the Rose Bishop of the Secrets Suppliant pathway, but it possesses mirror-related capabilities… As

Lumian observed, a succession of thoughts calmly raced through his mind.

Bloody Jack's red spiderweb-like eyes displayed a ruthless and bloodthirsty expression. He raised his axe and swung it at Lumian's body.

The deal is done. Now, I'm going to kill you!

Bang!

The axe missed Lumian and hit the ground of the quarry cave, creating a deep fissure and sending gravel and dirt flying.

With a twisted flexibility that exceeded human limits, Lumian maneuvered behind Bloody Jack.

With a swift motion of his arm, Lumian punched out with his right fist.

Blazing white flames surged forth, a bright tail enveloping his fist and wrapping around his forearm.

Pfft! Lumian's fist felt as if it had plunged into a swamp. The deeper he went, the more muddy and sticky it became.

Rumble! He detonated the blazing white flames surrounding his fist, blasting open a passageway.

His fist and forearm sank into Bloody Jack's cavity, halting at the pale-white spot.

Just as Bloody Jack was about to turn around and swing his axe, he froze. His body rapidly disintegrated, turning into congealed blood that fell to the ground.

The blood clots writhed and reassembled into Bloody Jack, but there was still a gap in his abdomen that couldn't be filled.

Seeing this, Lumian's body ignited with a blazing white flame, ready to attack with all his might.

Bloody Jack instantly turned ethereal and retreated into the mirror on the altar.

Lumian chuckled and abandoned the pursuit, ending the summoning ritual at a moderate pace.

His objective had been achieved. He had acquired the contracted ability—Mirror Mark!

Previously, he had observed Bloody Jack's river of fate not to gather information about it, but to verify if this strange creature from the bloody world possessed godhood!

If Bloody Jack didn't have godhood, Lumian could complete some risky transactions with him to circumvent the requirement of 99 living sacrifices. If

Bloody Jack had godhood, he would undoubtedly suffer a backlash. However, he was protected by the ritual and under Mr. Fool's gray fog's supervision, so he wouldn't be significantly affected.

It was precisely because he was aware of this that Lumian dared to agree to drag Bloody Jack out of the mirror, allowing him to no longer be restricted by the ritual.

It turned out that as long as the contracted party could communicate normally, the price to pay when signing the contract would be significantly lower.

Of course, there was no way to avoid the negative effects entirely. Although Lumian obtained the Mirror Mark, it would also make him more susceptible to attracting abnormal events and strange dangers related to mirrors.

As the crack created by Bloody Jack spread to the wall of spirituality, causing it to gradually disintegrate, Franca took the opportunity to curiously inquire about what had just transpired.

Lumian gave a brief account of his "negotiation" with Bloody Jack and smiled.

"I worked hard to reach Sequence 5 so that these evil creatures would be able to communicate with me calmly."

Franca couldn't resist laughing. "You call that calm?"

With a sigh, she said, "If it weren't for dealing with Moran Avigny, the Mirror Mark wouldn't be a wise choice. You wouldn't have much use for it normally. It's like wasting a contract slot."

This was due to Lumian's lack of mirror-related abilities. Without a fixed mirror world entrance, he couldn't pass through mirrors, let alone use the Mirror Mark to locate his target.

Lumian wasn't bothered by it.

"The Sealed Artifact corresponding to the Hisoka Beyonder characteristic might have the ability to transform into a Wraith. The Mirror Mark could be used to complement it."

"Let's hope that's the case," Franca said, sighing. "This is why Contractees can't compare to Shepherds. Once you sign a contract and gain an ability, you're stuck with it. Even if that ability becomes useless, it still takes up a slot and brings the associated negative effects."

Many contracted abilities were acquired to fulfill specific needs for a limited time. After that period, they often became useless. For instance, Lumian's Niese Face could only be used occasionally as an illusion during combat after he obtained the Lie earring.

Lumian smiled. "Who says I can't get rid of it?"

"Uh…" Franca was caught off guard.

Lumian's lips curved into a bright smile.

"Kill the contract target, and the contract will automatically be nullified."

Franca and Jenna gasped inwardly.

After a moment, Franca joked, "Very good. Keep that smile. That's the smile of a homicidal maniac—no, a Reaper."

Jenna nodded thoughtfully. "No wonder you didn't kill Bloody Jack just now and only scared it away. You were worried that the newly acquired abilities would vanish instantly. Didn't you mention you were planning to contract three abilities this time? Have you thought about the other two?"

"Yes." Lumian wasn't in a rush to complete the second ritual. He casually chatted, "One is to boost my defense or substitution abilities, while the other is to handle undead creatures. However, I'll need to think about the latter later."

The former addressed his lack of physical defense, while the latter made up for his insufficient means to deal with Wraiths and undead creatures.

"Substitution abilities…" Franca said, smiling. "Just sign a contract with a Wraith or specter formed by a Demoness or a Mid-Sequence Seer Beyonder after their death."

Lumian scoffed.

"Do you think I haven't considered that? However, apart from the Demoness evil spirit suspected to be a Saint, there's nothing related to Demonesses or Seers. I definitely can't handle the negative effects of a demigod contractor at my current level."

"Maybe it's manageable," Franca's eyes sparkled. "Maybe the adverse effects will only change your gender."

"What do you mean 'only'?" Lumian wanted to tease Franca for her "life is short, why not give it a shot" mindset, but he restrained himself in front of Jenna.

Franca suddenly had a thought. "Can you only sign contracts with spirit world creatures or strange creatures? Can you sign one with a human? I can share the Mirror Substitution ability with you."

This was the first time Lumian had considered this question. After thinking for a moment, he said, "The relevant mysticism knowledge doesn't forbid it… But never mind. The Inevitability contract might have some hidden corruption or influence."

"That's true." Franca was still rational.

As she responded, another question popped into her mind.

If I actually sign a contract with him, what kind of negative effects will I inflict on Lumian?

"Why does the ability to deal with the undead have to wait?" Jenna wasn't as quick-witted as Franca, so she could only focus on more practical matters.

Lumian chuckled. "Because spirit world creatures and strange creatures fear sunlight's purification and don't have similar abilities, I can only consider obtaining it from the death domain. There's a good contract target there."

"Armored Shadow?" Franca realized. "Are you worried that giving him too much gold will make future communication uncontrollable?"

Lumian nodded and replied,"Additionally, I'm also waiting for the Sealed Artifact made from the Hisoka Beyonder characteristic. If it's related to a Wraith, I won't need the corresponding contract ability."

After chatting for a while, Lumian reconstructed the wall of spirituality and began his second summoning.

This time, he summoned: "A peculiar creature wandering above the world, an unimaginably sturdy being, a colossal creature that never rests."

After reciting the incantation, a "peak" made of layers of flesh appeared at the mysterious door.

Its height was unknown, but it couldn't fully emerge, causing the illusory and mysterious door to shake.

After speaking the Mystical Language of Fate, Lumian obtained the corresponding information.

This "mountain of flesh" indeed possessed the ability to enhance one's defense. It could toughen one's body to be like steel or rock, but the corresponding downside was having a movement speed as slow as that of an ordinary turtle.

Lumian had no choice but to give up.

His alternative target was his messenger, Penitent Baynfel.

According to the messenger information provided by Madam Magician, Baynfel had the ability to bring his shadow to life and switch positions with his body at critical moments.

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Chapter 711 Choice

□□Since he was summoning his messenger, Lumian didn't perform the ritual in Mr. Fool's name. He simply called forth Penitent Baynfel, who was garbed in a black clergyman's robe, resembling a charred corpse with black flames clinging to his body.

"I wish to enter into another contract with you," Lumian requested with a smile.

He briefly recounted the power of Inevitability, the special contract, the sharing of abilities, the potential price, and the negative effects, awaiting Baynfel's decision.

Baynfel stayed silent for a few moments before responding in a deep voice, "If you're not worried about the downsides, I have no objections."

"What might the negative effects be?" Lumian inquired cautiously.

In Baynfel's empty, dark eye sockets, the dark flames that served as his eyes flickered twice.

"That hinges on your choice. I can let you finalize the contract. Once you know the specific negative effects, you can decide if you want to seal the deal."

Different choices lead to different negative effects? What choices? Lumian spoke the Mystical Language of Fate, filled with curiosity and puzzlement, allowing the silver-black symbols, words, and patterns to land on the faux goatskin, forming a short, powerful, mysterious, and sinister contract document.

Through the connection forged by the Mystical Language of Fate, Lumian sensed Baynfel's traits and abilities.

The Penitent's powers were intimately tied to shadows and darkness, but most of them seemed to be submerged in murky depths. Lumian could sense their presence, but he couldn't discern their nature.

The two abilities floating above the surface were Shadow Animation and Spirit World Traversal. Their characteristics were Ancient Corpse.

Perfect, Shadow Animation is just what I need… Baynfel probably showcased it specifically for me… He's quite unique, completely different from spirit world entities like Headless Bride, Abscessed Hand, and Human-Faced Mantis… It's much more straightforward to truly communicate with him… As Lumian mused, he gained a deeper understanding of Shadow Animation.

This was an active ability that could animate the shadows of oneself and others. The former could be used to swap places with the body and evade fatal damage when dodging was impossible. The latter would ensnare the corresponding target, hindering their movements, but it couldn't inflict much harm or completely restrain the opponent.

Activating it swiftly to produce instantaneous effects was its greatest strength. Otherwise, it couldn't shield from death or injury. Its drawback was that it could only maintain the activation of one shadow at a time.

As a substitute, if the animated shadow perished, Lumian would have to wait for the sun to rise or set before the shadow would reappear. Shadowless individuals would be deathly afraid of sunlight and instinctively dread it.

In the past, my emotions and desires were volatile, and now I'm piling on a fear of sunlight? If I really run into Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Sun pathway in the future, won't I be too terrified to even open my eyes? Thankfully, this is a downside that only kicks in after losing the shadow substitute. It's not permanent… Lumian looked at Baynfel and asked sincerely, "What sacrifice do you require? Or rather, what price must I pay?"

So far, he still hadn't figured out the negative repercussions of signing a contract with Baynfel.

Penitent Baynfel, with only a thin layer of charred skin clinging to his bones, replied, "Any mystical item in your possession."

Any one… Is this the so-called choice? Picking a mystical item to offer directly shapes the ultimate negative effects? Lumian had an epiphany as he took stock of the mystical items he carried.

His knee-jerk thought was the Pride Armor. After all, he couldn't effectively use the Sealed Artifact at present. However, looking at Baynfel's charred corpse, he felt that he wasn't just sacrificing an item but attempting to off his messenger. Furthermore, while he couldn't use the Pride Armor for now, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony could. Lumian had already taught them the corresponding usage techniques.

At the crux of it all was a single mantra: Don't wear it yourself. Only utilize the negative effects by letting the target trigger them!

As for proactively triggering higher-level negative effects in exchange for indiscriminate area-of-effect damage, there was no way to teach that. It had to be improvised based on the environment and the enemy's traits. After all, Demonesses likely relished this method. It was brutally effective in bullying targets without substitute-type abilities!

Mystery Prying Glasses, Flog boxing gloves, Eye of Truth, Lie earring, Mr. K's finger, Symphony of Hatred bone flute, Fury of the Sea brooch, Traveler's Bag, Omebella's umbilical cord remains, expired misfortune gold coins and unlucky

banknotes, Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic… Lumian went through these items one by one.

Excluding non-mystical items and ones that were very handy to him at the moment, Lumian ultimately decided to choose between the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth.

Their abilities overlapped to a degree. Keeping one sufficed.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian opted to offer the Eye of Truth to Baynfel.

He believed that the Mystery Prying Glasses had fewer negative effects than the Eye of Truth when usage time was limited. Furthermore, the Eye of Truth could only see the truth. The Mystery Prying Glasses could at least be used to paint supernatural works and disguise himself. After Lumian became an Ascetic, he could effectively rein in the urge to paint while donning the Mystery Prying Glasses. He could paint as needed or abstain.

Lumian produced the peculiar Eye of Truth and handed it to Baynfel.

Just as Baynfel grasped the eyewear, which appeared entwined with flesh and blood vessels, Lumian suddenly sensed the downside of signing the contract.

In scenes closely tied to Baynfel's past, he would witness truths better left unseen.

However, it's fine if such effects only happen when it involves this messenger's enigmatic background. Otherwise, I would have cut today's ritual short and made a new choice after finding a suitable contract partner… In Aurore and Franca's words, seeing what shouldn't be seen is a death sentence… Lumian pondered for a moment and replied to Baynfel in a deep voice, "The contract stands."

As he finished speaking, the short and sinister contract spontaneously ignited without fire, transforming into silver-black symbols, words, and patterns that seared onto Lumian's arm.

Lumian glanced down at his shadow and saw it warp on its own, as if performing a powerful dance.

A smile spread across Lumian's face.

After about ten seconds, his shadow settled.

Lumian expressed his gratitude to Baynfel and ended the summoning, stowing away all the items on the altar.

"It's done?" Franca asked eagerly.

It wasn't that she doubted Lumian couldn't even handle his messenger, but she worried the nature of his abilities might not meet the requirements or come with too many strings attached.

Lumian nodded and briefly recounted the situation with Shadow Animation.

As he walked towards the quarry cave's exit, he said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Now, we can hatch a plan to deal with Moran Avigny.

"Franca, contact the Demoness of Black and let her know we're about to make our move. However, to avoid spooking the family and hidden forces behind Moran Avigny, she doesn't need to observe nearby for now. Just request an emergency help charm from her that can contact her through a mirror if the Mirror People have hidden allies. Yes, it's a golden opportunity to test the Demoness of Black's stance towards the Tamara family and the Mirror People. Also, inform the Eternal Blazing Sun Church that they can get ready to cut us some slack.

"Jenna, write to Madam Judgment and clue her in on our plan in the event the Demoness of Black is in bed with the Mirror People.

"Anthony…"

Lumian's mind raced as he considered various details and doled out missions to his companions.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony didn't just passively accept their tasks. They actively chimed in with ideas and helped Lumian fill in gaps and polish his brainstorming.

Upon returning to Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, Anthony ducked out early to keep up appearances at the Trier Psychiatrist Guild. Jenna, meanwhile, changed into a dark black cloaked dress and seized the chance to play the part of a Witch.

Soon, only Lumian and Franca remained in the apartment's living room.

The atmosphere grew awkward, and a prolonged silence hung in the air.

Lumian broke the ice as if nothing had happened.

"How's Jenna coming along with digesting the Witch potion?"

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and said, "Not bad. She's found her groove acting as a Witch. Ask around the market district and you'll hear whispers of Witches appearing in the dead of night to punish rowdy drunkards. Some claim to have fallen into an icy river. Some wake up the next day aching all over, while others get splitting headaches come evening and don't dare drink anymore. What they have in common is they all ran into someone dressed as a Witch. Yes, some drunkards even vanished into thin air…"

Franca's voice trailed off, replaced by a tone fit for telling ghost stories.

"The missing ones committed serious offenses? The others are guilty of beating their families, harassing passersby, and groping women?" Lumian guessed with a smile, based on his read of Jenna.

"Bingo." Franca nodded with a bright smile.

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, "Aren't you worried the Demoness of Black will catch wind of this rumor and send someone to investigate?"

Franca felt smug and pointed at herself.

"You're looking at her! Me! In the Demoness Sect, I'm the one handling matters tied to the market district!"

She then sighed and said, "Jenna is a natural. She whipped up a solid acting plan in under a month. Maybe she can digest the Witch potion before I advance to Affliction."

"If those incidents hadn't happened, she would've been a star actress. Acting is second nature to her," Lumian agreed.

The two fell silent again.

After a few seconds, Franca put on a brave face and said, "Um, um, you can't breathe a word to Jenna or anyone else about what I said or did near the altar in the mirror world!"

Lumian asked in confusion, "Did you say or do anything out of the ordinary back there?

"I don't recall…"

Franca was taken aback for a moment before flashing an understanding smile.

She stood up with a breezy grin and walked to Lumian's side. She patted his shoulder gratefully and said, "What a bro!"

She felt all the awkwardness had evaporated.

…

A few days later, as Moran Avigny attended an interministerial meeting, Lumian appeared near the government-provided villa.

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Chapter 712 "Accusation"

□□Lumian stood beside Moran Avigny's villa, wearing a wide-brimmed round hat and a black tweed coat. He gazed at the garden, its few withered leaves rustling in the breeze, and said to Franca, "Keep your distance later."

As he spoke, Lumian's eyes turned silver-black once more, allowing him to observe the fate tributaries corresponding to Franca's future.

The tributary tainted with a faint black color was unrelated to their upcoming infiltration. Given the current circumstances, sneaking into Moran Avigny's villa and leaving a Mirror Mark on the full-body mirror in his study didn't seem to pose a high risk of death.

However, Lumian knew better than to let his guard down. After using the Eye of Calamity several times, he understood that a single black fate tributary didn't necessarily mean there was only one hidden death calamity lurking.

According to Franca, numerous death calamities were concealed further along the fate tributary, too blurry for Lumian to discern or differentiate.

In other words, even though there was presently just one faintly black-tainted fate tributary connected to their infiltration of Moran Avigny's villa, when Franca made her decision and tried to enter, transforming the harmless fate tributary into the main path, a black tributary symbolizing a deadly calamity might still emerge.

Lumian's profound realization about this was: The fate of the future was variable and ever-evolving.

Of course, certain aspects were destined to remain constant. For instance, death was the inevitable fate awaiting most humans.

"No need to worry, I'm not new to this," Franca assured him, confident in her infiltration skills.

Assassin 101: Infiltration!

Without another word, Lumian activated the mark and morphed into a shadow creature, melding into the shadows cast by the garden's plants.

Franca stepped forward and disappeared into the wind-stirred shadows.

The pair swiftly and stealthily made their way to the side of the villa.

At the same time, Moran Avigny was attending a ministerial meeting. His wife had gone to an art salon with her lady's maid, leaving only a handful of valets, maids, gardeners, and chefs in the villa.

The Avigny family didn't live there. Only the immediate family of the Minister of Industry was permitted to reside in the government-provided villa long-term. Moran Avigny's three children had either already married and moved out or were attending university in the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. They only returned home on weekends.

For Lumian and Franca, this was when the target location's security was at its most vulnerable. After all, Moran Avigny was the VIP. The covert protection detail would undoubtedly stick close to him.

Lumian emerged from the shadows in the corner and instructed Franca,

"Wait here and keep an eye out for any trouble."

"Got it!" Franca agreed without protest.

Lumian concentrated on the Demoness of Pleasure's fate tributary for a few moments before shifting back into a shadow creature and silently slipping into Moran Avigny's villa.

He couldn't view his own future fate, even with the aid of a mirror. His only option was to infer his fate by watching his companions.

Franca concealed herself in the shadows and patiently waited.

It wasn't long before Lumian reached Moran Avigny's study, navigating it as if it were his own home. He had witnessed Moran Avigny use the full-body mirror there to access the mirror world on multiple occasions.

As for his familiarity with the layout, that was thanks to the detailed security map provided by 007.

The winter sunlight around 4 p.m. was dim. The study was a mix of light and darkness, evoking a strong sense of dusk. The silence had long been a constant melody in this space.

Lumian meticulously searched the study from within the shadows but found no traps or hidden individuals.

Only then did he revert to his human form, breaking free from the shadows and reappearing in front of the full-body mirror.

As the black mark activated, Lumian reached out his right palm and pressed it against the cold, hard glass.

A blood-colored handprint instantly materialized, reversed from Lumian's right palm as if it belonged to someone else.

The inverted, sinister blood-colored palm print quickly faded, blending into the mirror and vanishing.

Just as Lumian was about to pull his right palm back and leave, a hand abruptly extended from the full-body mirror and seized his wrist.

The hand was a healthy white, with long, powerful fingers.

It yanked with tremendous force, catching Lumian off guard and sending him crashing into the glass mirror.

At some point, the mirror had turned ethereal, shedding its corporeal form. Lumian's vision went dark before illuminating to reveal numerous dark passageways resembling a spiderweb.

In the area corresponding to the current mirror, an ordinary-looking man stood at the edge. He raised his brass revolver, aimed it at Lumian, and pulled the trigger.

Clad in a dark tweed suit and a half top hat, with a glass-like cufflink fastened to his sleeve, he wore a faint smile, as if mocking Lumian for not anticipating the possibility of Moran Avigny's bodyguard hiding in the mirror.

Bang!

A bullet gleaming with ghostly green light shot towards Lumian.

Lumian's figure abruptly vanished. The bullet struck the afterimage he left behind and flew into one of the dark, empty tunnels.

In the next instant, Lumian swiftly materialized behind the ambusher and, without hesitation, harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot out from his nose and struck the ambusher.

The ambusher's eyes snapped shut, and he crumpled to the ground.

Midway through, his eyes darted around and he snapped out of his daze.

Thud! He crashed to the ground, transforming his body into a shadow.

The shadows disintegrated and spread in all directions, entering various dark tunnels.

Immediately after, the ambusher stealthily materialized in an empty passageway, his form shrouded in faint white fog.

Lumian's figure was reflected in his misty eyes. Before Lumian could sense it and turn to look, the ambusher spoke in a strange language that could stir the forces of nature, "You're guilty!"

Lumian had never encountered this language, but he clearly understood its meaning. His body suddenly froze, as if under an invisible restriction.

The ambusher opened his mouth again.

"You blasphemer!"

Suddenly, the entire mirror world froze, and the dark, ethereal passageways transformed into tiny amber insects.

Once again, Lumian heard a terrifying voice that seemed to come from an infinite distance.

Vaguely, he "saw" three figures.

The three figures sat cross-legged, one facing left, one looking straight ahead, and the other looking right. Their hands were in different postures.

One was heavy, one real, and one ethereal. They were in three different states, constantly moving, changing, and interchanging around a silver circle.

A majestic and resounding voice reverberated, causing Lumian's mind to buzz as he lost consciousness.

Amidst the blurry, vivid pain, the dazed Lumian felt a familiar burning sensation on his left chest. His right palm alternated between burning and freezing.

Gradually, he regained consciousness.

In a dark tunnel that had solidified, the ambusher witnessed silver-black warts erupting from Lumian's body, emitting sinister patterns that resembled viscous liquid. At some point, a strange, cold wind swept through the surroundings. Darkness squirmed in the depths of the different tunnels, as if a monster was about to crawl out.

The ambusher's body stiffened, becoming increasingly sluggish, with a faint white fog barely discernible within.

After an unknown period of time, the man finally survived the most dangerous moment. He felt his body again and regained his vision and hearing.

As Lumian's warts and patterns faded, the ambusher instinctively felt a lingering fear.

How did he commit blasphemy?

Which deity did he blaspheme against?

Why didn't he lose control?

I've never encountered such a situation before!

The Beyonder powers possessed by the ambusher allowed him to discern the target's crimes and "accuse" him of various charges. The damage and effects of different crimes were completely different, and the accuser couldn't predict them beforehand. They could only make a guess based on their experience from previous "cases."

This was the first time the ambusher had encountered a situation where he nearly succumbed to the overflowing influence of the deity after the sinner was punished by a deity for blasphemy!

Fortunately, he recovered before the target.

The ambusher raised the brass revolver once more and aimed it at Lumian, who was hunched over in pain.

Just as he pulled the trigger, Lumian's head snapped up, his expression contorted with ferocity.

Bang!

A bullet shimmering with starlight shot out from the muzzle, locked onto the target's body.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian's shadow came to life and flipped upward.

Crack!

The black shadow shattered like a mirror. Along with the starlight, it caved in and was obliterated.

After briefly disappearing, Lumian materialized behind the ambusher and harrumphed once more.

He had used Shadow Animation in time, and the shadow had triggered Franca's Mirror Substitution!

This was why Lumian had Franca infiltrate the villa and stay outside. Relying on Mirror Substitution required maintaining a certain distance.

It turned out his shadow could also share Mirror Substitution!

Two beams of white light shot out, causing the ambusher to close his eyes again.

This time, Lumian didn't give the enemy a chance to quickly wake up. He extended his right foot and blocked the enemy, preventing him from falling.

Simultaneously, he drew his revolver and pressed it against the target's forehead.

The ambusher's eyes darted around, and he awoke to the terrifying pressure emanating from the muzzle.

He forced a smile, handed over his revolver, and whispered, "I'll give this to you. Can you let me go?"

Lumian's thoughts raced as he took the revolver and nodded. "Okay."

He then holstered his revolver.

The ambusher maintained a humble and ingratiating smile as he turned around and walked deeper into the dark tunnel.

Suddenly, Lumian heard Termiboros's magnificent voice.

"It's best not to let him go."

Uh… Lumian's eyes narrowed as he instantly sensed something was off.

Why did I agree to that deal just now?

Why would I let him go?

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Chapter 713 Between White and Black

□□Warned by Termiboros, Lumian sensed something was off.

The ambusher was slowly making his exit, as if concerned that moving too fast would prematurely alert Lumian to the abnormality. Strangely, no massive vortex emerged from the dark, empty tunnel's depths, stopping the ambusher, who had already gone in, from getting pulled into another mirror.

As he watched him go, Lumian glanced at his restored shadow, put away the brass revolver taken from the enemy, and pulled out the Flog boxing gloves from his Traveler's Bag. He put them on at a measured pace.

A moment later, blazing white flames engulfed Lumian's body as he transformed into a fiery spear that hurtled towards the ambusher's back.

The ambusher's fears came to pass. He quickly evaded, ready to turn into a shadow and escape into the dark tunnel's depths with five decoys. Then he would trigger Mirror Traversal and get away entirely, returning to a pre-selected mirror.

Just then, as the flames making up the burning white spear dissipated, Lumian appeared.

The ambusher's shadow came alive, ensnaring the body that hadn't fully transformed into a shadow, briefly keeping it from dividing into six separate forms. It was forced to remain in place.

Lumian advanced and dashed in front of the terrified ambusher. He alternated punches, starting the Flogging.

Bang!

Lumian's initial punch heightened the ambusher's fear, and the target narrowly freed himself from his shadow's entanglement.

Bang!

Lumian's next punch instantly set off the enemy's already tense fear.

This wasn't chance; the ambusher's fear clearly exceeded normal levels in this situation. Lumian, his eyes silver-black, foresaw the corresponding future and exploited this vulnerability. Fear played out in his mind as he punched.

Thus, the first punch worsened the situation, and the second significantly raised the odds, successfully triggering the fear.

The ambusher went rigid, heart briefly ceasing from the detonating fear. His mind blanked, and blood poured from his nose.

Seeing this, Lumian took out the ritual sheepskin from his Traveler's Bag and threw it over the ambusher's head.

Right after, he spoke the activation incantation in Hermes: "Sheep!"

Amid a dark flash, the ambusher turned into a sheep with light white and gray wool.

Lumian stared at the fearful sheep with bloodshot eyes. Removing the Flog boxing gloves and returning them to his Traveler's Bag, he grinned and said,

"So, you think I'll release you for a measly gun?"

Lumian then stooped down, scooped up the limp sheep, and went back to the mirror in Moran Avigny's study, trying to exit.

Unable to enter or leave mirrors, he wasn't certain he could depart so simply. If not, he would utilize the pre-prepared Mirror Mark and Spirit World Traversal to go directly to the unique, permanent mirror world exit in Underground Trier. Then he would teleport to locate Franca. This would avert any issues behind the mirror.

Lumian's vision faded and brightened as he emerged in Moran Avigny's study with the frightened sheep.

He rushed to the window and warily opened it. Sure enough, Franca had exited the shadows and waited by the small windowsill.

Realizing Lumian's Mirror Substitution had shattered, Franca quickly chose to investigate and check if her partner required aid.

You okay?" Franca whispered.

"We'll discuss it later." Lumian threw her the sheep.

Franca promptly caught the sheep and vanished into the shadows with it.

In no rush to go, Lumian donned gloves and took care of the various traces he had left behind.

Soon, Franca returned, using the Primordial Demoness figurine, her mirror, and Demoness black magic to handle the anti-divination and anti-prophecy part.

…

In an abandoned tunnel close to the permanent mirror world entrance in Underground Trier,

Franca, now fully briefed by Lumian, eyed the quivering sheep and said eagerly, "How should we question it? Should I ready a mechanical typewriter like last time?

"But we've run out of truth serum."

Anthony, sans gold-rimmed glasses and back in veteran garb, gazed at the sheep for a couple seconds before responding, "I'll talk with him."

"Should we step out first?" Jenna asked out of caution.

Anthony agreed with a nod.

"I don't mind you observing, but he'll feel more at ease with less people, facilitating communication."

Concerned our attendance will scare him and impact the Hypnotism? Lumian spun around pensively and exited the sealed dark tunnel alongside Franca and Jenna.

Soon, the sheep appeared with Anthony, no longer as scared and nervous.

"You may cancel the Animal Creation Spell," Anthony told Lumian, smiling. "He realizes we're acting in his best interest and wishes to assist. Provided we avoid topics that will impact his faith in a deity and directly affect his life, he'll speak honestly and amiably."

The sheep nodded gravely, confirming Anthony's words.

Lumian faced Franca and Jenna, seeing matching emotions in their eyes.

A Hypnotist is truly terrifying!

A Spectator is truly terrifying!

Indeed… Lumian reflected inwardly.

Looking at the sheep, he uttered the Hermes incantation: "His Grace."

With a dark flicker, the sheepskin automatically vanished, and the ambusher materialized before Lumian and the others, half-crouched.

Putting away the sheepskin, Lumian inquired with a smile, "What's your name?"

"Jebus Lata," the ambusher answered nonchalantly, like talking to a buddy.

Holding the carbide lamp, Lumian warmly asked, "Were you guarding Moran Avigny?"

"Yes," Jebus Lata replied frankly. "Mainly to conceal myself behind the mirror and watch the outside. Also to prevent mirror world mishaps and ensure Moran Avigny

isn't found out and ambushed when he uses it to do specific things in various locations."

Security is fairly tight. No clear weak points… Franca muttered, taking the lead in displaying her Demoness of Pleasure charm. Grinning, she asked, "Which organization do you belong to?"

Jebus's eyes were drawn to Franca as he reflexively answered,

"The School of Truth."

"Truth?" Lumian arched an eyebrow.

Jebus didn't face him, gaze flitting between the two Demonesses.

"Yes, Truth."

Growing serious, he addressed Franca and Jenna in a proselytizing tone, "What do you believe this world's backdrop is?

Without waiting for the Demonesses' response, he continued, "It's not white or black. Not light or darkness.

"It's the gray between white and black, the mist between light and darkness. It's shadows, flux, and chaos!"

Traits of the corresponding pathway? Well-versed in mysticism, Lumian thoughtfully switched gears.

"Are you aware of Moran Avigny's identity?"

This was their top priority now.

Jebus nodded casually, as if conversing with a friend.

"I am. He's part of the Tamara family but was swapped with a Mirror Person from Underground Trier."

"Then why collaborate with him still?" Franca probed.

Jebus chuckled.

"Didn't I just say?

"This world's backdrop isn't white or black, but gray. If cooperating with Mirror People lets me reach my aim, why not?"

"What's the School of Truth after?" Lumian swiftly queried.

Jebus peered at Franca's face and lake-blue eyes, stating, "We seek to leverage Moran Avigny and other elites to slowly seize control of Intis's government, letting

this nation have order yet shadows, plus a conduit for ordered communication and shadows.

"We honor the law, but that won't stop us from uncovering legal loopholes and employing select methods to settle matters pre-litigation.

"That's our ideology."

Jebus seemed to preach to the Demonesses.

How ambitious… Jenna sighed inwardly.

Smiling, Lumian asked, "Why control the government?"

"To practice and near the truth, a rite to please it," Jebus responded fanatically. "Plus, we must use Intis's government and others to locate three things."

"What three?" Franca inquired curiously.

Jebus gladly obliged her.

"One, clues to fallen heaven. It's in the underground ancient sealed city. Only by controlling Intis's government can we fully unseal it."

Fallen heaven… What's that? Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony shared looks, realizing none had heard the term.

Jebus went on, "Two, Roselle's final mausoleum."

Emperor Roselle's mausoleum? Lumian's pupils widened.

Franca asked eagerly, "Got any clues?"

"I don't know." Jebus shook his head honestly. "At minimum, I've got zero leads on Roselle's tomb. No idea if the Overseers have found anything."

Overseer… Lumian and the rest committed the title to memory.

Jebus glanced from Franca to Jenna, then back to Franca.

"Three, a lamp. The Magic Wishing Lamp."

Magic Wishing Lamp? Lumian checked Franca, seeing the Demoness of Pleasure also looked blank.

Smiling, Jebus added with a showy air, "The Magic Wishing Lamp is a Sealed Artifact. Its number is: 0-05!"

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Chapter 714 The Fractured Tamara Family

□□Jebus eagerly observed Franca and Jenna after mentioning 0-05, hoping to witness expressions of shock and terror on their faces.

Considering the immense power demonstrated by this Beyonder team, they surely grasped the gravity of a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact!

It was a horrifying object capable of obliterating not just Trier, but potentially the whole world!

The higher the serial number of a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact, the more dangerous it would be.

And now, they were talking about 0-05!

While Franca and Jenna were intrigued and surprised, their reaction didn't match Jebus's expectations.

Instead of responding to Jebus, they turned their attention to Lumian.

Despite not having seen or dared to read the details, they had learned from Lumian that Ludwig, the monstrous child, had "stolen" Sealed Artifact information from the Church of Knowledge and given it to Lumian as payment for a deal.

The information pertained to 0-01!

0-05? Lumian raised an eyebrow.

To his knowledge, Sealed Artifacts probably didn't have serial numbers in ancient times. Even if they did, they were individual actions of different Churches. It wasn't until the end of the Fourth Epoch or the beginning of the Fifth Epoch that the seven ruling Churches established the current Sealed Artifact classification rules and numbered the ones under their control.

Among them, due to the immense danger posed by Grade 0 and Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts, the orthodox Churches had agreed to share general information with each other and unify their serial numbers without duplicates.

In other words, it was impossible for both the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the Evernight Goddess Church to possess a 0-05 Sealed Artifact.

In the entire world, only the Magic Wishing Lamp could be called 0-05!

When the seven Churches first numbered their Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, they undoubtedly ranked them according to the level of danger, time of appearance, and intrinsic uniqueness. Subsequent acquisitions would be named in the order they were sealed.

This way, there was a high likelihood that the dozens of Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts at the top of the list would adhere to posing greater danger and having greater uniqueness the lower the serial number. For 0-05 to be ranked fifth among the countless Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts spoke volumes about its terrifying power and significance!

Of course, based on these rules, the Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts with the lowest serial numbers might not necessarily be weaker than those with higher serial numbers.

Lumian looked at Jebus and said in a relatively calm tone, "0-05? A terrifying item ranked fifth among all Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts?"

"Indeed," Jebus replied, his desire to show off finally satisfied.

Lumian inquired curiously, "Does its name, Magic Wishing Lamp, imply that you can make wishes with it?"

At that moment, Lumian's heart swelled with anticipation that surpassed his outward expression.

Jebus nodded solemnly.

"Yes, it can grant the holder any ten wishes."

Before Lumian could probe further, Jebus added, "However, as far as I know, the fulfillment of those wishes often takes a distorted form or comes with horrifying consequences. Moreover, none of those who once possessed the divine lamp met a good end. Perhaps Roselle Gustav met his demise because of this."

Lumian fell silent upon hearing this revelation.

Franca glanced at Lumian and asked, "Did 0-05 once belong to Emperor Roselle?"

Jebus responded without hesitation, "Yes."

Franca inquired with interest, "What about now? Do you have any leads on 0-05's whereabouts?"

Jebus was eager to share what he knew.

"Yes, it should be with the leader of the secret organization, Element Dawn.

"That leader is believed to be Roselle's eldest daughter, Bernadette."

"Wow!" Franca exclaimed in admiration and relief, as if the child of an old friend was thriving after the latter's passing.

Although she and Lumian had learned after the sea prayer ritual that Emperor Roselle's eldest daughter, Bernadette, was alive and had invented fairytale magic, closely linked to the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card, The Hermit, they were unaware of her precise circumstances.

Now, she was pleasantly surprised to discover that Bernadette had become the leader of a secret organization.

Franca had long been familiar with Element Dawn. She knew they focused on studying mysticism and Beyonder alchemy, opposing another knowledge-seeking secret organization, the Moses Ascetic Order. They were primarily active in the Intis region, the south-central zone, and the sea.

"It's only natural for the Emperor's belongings to be with his eldest daughter," Lumian remarked, feeling somewhat pleased for Emperor Roselle.

Franca asked Jebus excitedly, "Are you planning to confront Bernadette?"

Jebus slowly shook his head.

"We don't have the necessary strength yet. That's one of the reasons we collaborate with the Mirror People.

"Only by embracing and pleasing the truth can the Overseers obtain more boons to resist Bernadette and her subordinates."

Controlling the government and embracing the truth to varying degrees is a boon-seeking ritual? Yes, Jebus himself mentioned that this is a ritual to please the truth… Their boon-

receiving ritual differs from that of other evil god cults. Rather than primarily focusing on blood sacrifices, it emphasizes the influence, utilization, and transformation of order… Lumian summarized a key characteristic of the School of Truth based on Jebus's words.

After a moment of contemplation, he asked, "Overseer is both a position and a name? What's the Sequence equivalent in the potion pathway?"

"Sequence 4, having just attained godhood," Jebus replied concisely. It was unclear whether he was reluctant to disclose such matters or if he simply didn't know much.

Lumian continued, "We've already grasped your school's philosophy and objectives. What's the purpose of the Mirror People?"

Jebus pondered for a moment before responding, "They also want to break the seal of the ancient underground city. Only by breaking the seal can they enter the

depths of the special mirror world where they originally resided and find something of great importance, but it has nothing to do with us.

"They've been allowing more Mirror People to sneak out and replace the originals.

"I'm not sure if they have any other motives."

"Apart from Moran Avigny, which other Mirror People do you know?" Franca didn't conceal her desire to know the answer.

Jebus shook his head.

"Ever since we reached a collaborative agreement with Moran Avigny, he's had the other Mirror People change their positions and identities. He's the only one who can contact them."

"How did you discover that Moran Avigny is a Mirror Person?" Lumian sought additional clues.

Jebus chuckled.

"Our School of Truth was founded with some members of the Tamara family as its core. Several of them had long suspected that something was off with Moran Avigny and other clansmen. After receiving the truth's revelation, they confirmed this suspicion."

"Which pathway does Moran Avigny's original body belong to?" Lumian frowned.

Jebus didn't conceal anything for Moran Avigny's sake.

"The Judgment pathway. Not only does he possess the power of the Judgment pathway, but he can also wield mirror-related powers."

"Are there any members of the Tamara family's Judgment lineage who don't follow the truth and aren't replaced by Mirror People?" Lumian inquired further.

"Yes, they've cut ties with our School of Truth and have been trying to deal with us," Jebus replied truthfully.

Wh— The Tamara family first split into two branches, Judgment and Apprentice. Then, the Judgment branch splintered into three parts: those who believe in the truth, those replaced by the Mirror People, and those who adhered to their original traditions… However, the ones with the connection between the Apprentice branch of the Tamara family and the Demoness Sect are more likely to be replaced by the Mirror People. Has that branch also fractured? Why is the Tamara family constantly splintering… Even if the Tamara family doesn't fracture, there's still the risk of being replaced by the Mirror People? Could this stem from some unresolved mysteries of the Fourth Epoch? Lumian analyzed and speculated based on the available information.

"What's Moran Avigny's approximate Sequence?" Jenna asked, noticing Lumian's silence.

"Sequence 5," Jebus answered Jenna's question with a smile.

Sequence 5 Disciplinary Paladin… Franca, under the guidance of Madam Judgment, a Major Arcana card holder, was well-versed in the Arbiter pathway.

Sequence 9 was Arbiter, Sequence 8 was Sheriff, Sequence 7 was Interrogator, and Sequence 6 was Judge.

Disciplinary Paladin with mirror magic and mirror world-

related abilities… Lumian looked at Jebus and asked with a smile,

"You're not a Mirror Person or a Demoness. Why can you freely enter and exit the mirror world without being affected by the dangers there?"

Jebus pointed at the glass cufflink on his sleeve.

"This is an item given to us by Moran Avigny. It allows us to enter and exit the mirror world and use the connections between mirrors to traverse without being absorbed into other mirrors.

"I can still use it five times."

Very good. It will be ours in the future… Yes, let's call them Mirror Cufflink… At that moment, Franca had already thought of a name for the cufflink.

Lumian nodded and replied, "If your abilities correspond to a potion pathway, what would Sequence 9 be called?"

Given the looming potential conflict with the School of Truth, Lumian didn't let the opportunity to understand the other party's Beyonder powers slip away.

A proud smile graced Jebus's face. "It's Broker. We are the gray between white and black, the fog between light and darkness. We are the bridge between order and shadows!"

"Could you say something more comprehensible…" Franca muttered under her breath.

Lumian smiled and asked without hesitation, "What abilities does Broker possess?"

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Chapter 715 Shadow Merchant

Jebus reorganized his thoughts and said, "We can become more attuned to certain needs and find suitable candidates to fulfill them. We can also facilitate the corresponding transactions through our words and connections."

With his Conspirer's mind, Lumian pondered seriously for two seconds before fully grasping Jebus's true meaning. Amused, he said, "Put it in simpler terms that are closer to mysticism."

Jebus glanced at Franca and Jenna and eagerly explained, "I have two primary abilities. One is called Gray Perception. I can more acutely sense the gray areas between white and black, including my desire and need to enter that gray domain.

"The other is exceptional eloquence. This includes mastery of language and the ability to observe others' expressions and decipher their words."

"That's it?" Lumian asked, raising his eyebrows.

"That's it," Jebus replied candidly with a shake of his head.

"Don't Brokers charge fees for their services?" Lumian inquired with a smile.

"Before reaching a deal, we will agree on a price with both parties. Sometimes, we don't even ask for one. It's mainly to establish and maintain relationships," Jebus answered seriously. "None of this involves any superpowers."

I had thought a Broker's Beyonder powers could derive corresponding benefits from every transaction they facilitate, including Beyonder enhancements. However, this is clearly an exaggeration. It doesn't seem to belong to Sequence 9… The two abilities Jebus mentioned are very fitting for those at Sequence 9. From the looks of it, Brokers and Spectators are quite similar. They can hardly participate directly in Beyonder battles and are considered more supplementary support… Lumian nodded in enlightenment.

Franca asked with interest, "What's Sequence 8?"

"It's Shadow Merchant," Jebus replied with a smile as he gazed at the Demoness of Pleasure's face.

Without waiting for Franca to inquire further, he took the initiative to explain, "We can detect mysterious creatures and dangerous entities hidden in darkness and shadow while remaining safe from their attacks, thereby allowing us to reach certain deals with them."

Jenna couldn't help but ask, "Invulnerable to hidden mysterious creatures and dangerous entities?"

Isn't this ability too powerful?

Jebus replied with a smile, "That's usually the case, but you can't attack the other party first or secretly exert any influence that's disadvantageous to them. You can't harbor malice when striking a deal, lest the other party discovers it. Furthermore, you'll suffer indiscriminate damage if embroiled in a battlefield. You can't make creatures engaged in combat stand down."

"What if you see something you shouldn't?" Lumian asked after some thought.

"I will endure the corresponding corruption," Jebus answered without attempting to boast.

"So it seems a Shadow Merchant possesses an aura that prevents nearby creatures from harboring malice towards them?" Franca realized.

Jebus praised, "Madame, your summary is better than mine. However, it's not that you don't generate malice at all, but that you reduce their malice to a certain extent. The higher the other party's level, the weaker the effect. In other words, interacting with those mysterious creatures and dangerous entities to reach a deal is still risky and requires courage."

At this point, Jebus chuckled.

"Taking risks is a necessary quality for successful merchants."

"From the looks of it, you embody that?" Lumian deliberately provoked.

"Of course," Jebus replied proudly. "I've made deals with many dangerous creatures and obtained valuable items. Then, through new deals, I used them to exchange for more useful items from believers of the Great Mother, the Mother Tree of Desire, and other Beyonders. These include bullets that can absorb life, bullets that cause a target's implosion, and bullets that can impregnate a human, among other things."

Bullets that can impregnate a human… Lumian was suddenly traumatized. He was grateful he hadn't given Jebus a chance to fire that bullet.

Franca and Jenna felt an inexplicable fear, their bodies turning cold. Even Anthony's expression shifted slightly.

Jebus's gaze swept across Franca, Jenna, Lumian, and his friend Anthony. He said solemnly,

"Using our connections with various creatures, we Shadow Merchants can assist you in obtaining anything you desire, as long as you pay a sufficient price.

"Of course, we can't guarantee success in every transaction."

"I want the Sequence 4 potion formula of the Hunter pathway," Lumian said with a smile.

Jebus fell silent for a moment before saying, "It will take an extremely long time to find someone who can provide the corresponding formula through multiple intermediaries.

"The one who ultimately makes the deal with you might even pose a danger to you."

Lumian had only been joking. He deliberately sighed and said, "Then let's put that aside for now.

"What other abilities does a Shadow Merchant possess? Your abilities can't be limited to just reducing the malice of surrounding creatures and detecting hidden entities."

Jebus finally met Lumian's gaze.

"I've used some of them in my battles with you, including concealing myself in shadows, transforming into a shadow, and creating fake shadows. They're more protective abilities. I collectively call them 'Shadow Utilization.'"

Franca sighed with emotion. "Shadow Merchants can utilize not only symbolic shadows, but also shadows in reality."

Encouraged, Jebus continued, "We can also sign contracts with the shadows of both parties as witnesses, directly connected to each other's souls. If we violate the contract, the shadows will harm our spirits. It's like a powerful curse."

"I see…" Franca recalled the fellow she had encountered earlier.

The man, who also appeared to be a member of the School of Truth, had mentioned that he had a way to ensure the binding power of contracts on both parties.

"And then?" Jenna pressed.

Jebus suddenly felt a little embarrassed. He coughed twice and said, "We can also rely on symbolic shadow power to secretly modify key terms the moment the contract is signed, making the other party offer more or less."

"No wonder…" Franca finally understood how the man suspected of being a member of the School of Truth had deceived her and Jenna.

No wonder he had revealed an abnormality once she mentioned divining the contract in advance!

Shadow Merchants are well-suited for dealing with Beyonders of the Marauder pathway. I wonder which side will ultimately suffer… Lumian didn't give Franca a chance to criticize the Shadow Merchant. He chuckled and questioned, "What about Sequence 7?"

"Sequence 7 is Prosecutor," Jebus introduced, as if trying to compensate for the Shadow Merchant's dark image. "A Prosecutor has two abilities. One allows them to discern a target's crimes, but they can't witness the process. The other is based on the first ability. First, declare the other party guilty, then point out the specific crime…"

Franca turned puzzled.

"How can this crime be determined?

"It can't be based on Intis law, can it? If we meet in the Loen Kingdom, won't your abilities be useless?

"Do they automatically adapt to local laws?"

This seemed to be the first time Jebus had been asked this question. After more than ten seconds of thought, he replied,

"It's likely an act recognized as a crime by most humans. It includes blasphemy, murder, rape, fraud, theft, and so on. Nothing more detailed or categorized."

Franca remained unconvinced. "That's not right either. Suppose we enter a ridiculous world where we can do whatever we want, including murder and blasphemy. Wouldn't that prevent you from declaring the target guilty?"

She was thinking of the recently concluded Dream Festival.

Jebus fell silent for a moment before responding, "I don't know…"

"Perhaps the charges stem from something more fundamental," Lumian speculated.

Jebus couldn't be certain.

Franca could only look at him and say, "Continue."

Jebus took a moment to recall where he had left off.

"After pointing out the crime, the target will receive the corresponding punishment from the world itself or some entity. The exact punishment depends on the severity of the target's crime. We can't know in advance. In short, from my experience, the most terrifying punishments are immediate death and loss of control on the spot.

"In addition, for ongoing crimes, we can directly declare the target guilty. There's no need to specify the charges, effectively saving time."

Franca nodded slightly, gaining a new understanding of the battle.

"What language did you use when you announced the charge?" Lumian recalled the corresponding details.

"It's the Words of Order. I automatically learned it when I received the Prosecutor's boon," Jebus confessed.

Lumian offered a curt acknowledgment. "What about Sequence 6?"

"It's the Ambitionist," Jebus said, his eyes seeming to blaze with flames. "An inexhaustible ambition brings about a powerful physique, keen perception, and outstanding spirituality, driving us to constantly pursue improvements in our combat abilities. And our burning ambitions make us unwilling to rest for a moment. Unless we're prepared to sleep, no one can force us to sleep or faint…"

"In other words, it can effectively resist being forced into dreams, comas, and other debilitating states? Or is it outright immunity?" Lumian immediately understood why Jebus could wake up so quickly when facing the Spell of Harrumph.

"It's resistance," Jebus admitted candidly.

Lumian inquired further about Ambitionists before asking, "You should be at Sequence 5, right?"

"Yes." Jebus puffed out his chest in front of the two Demonesses.

Franca asked curiously, "What's Sequence 5?"

Jebus replied with a smile, "It's Under the Table."

Under the Table? Franca, Lumian, and the others simultaneously thought of the Authority Holder's Under-the-

table Transaction they had obtained from General Philip.

Could it be formed by the power of a Sequence 5 boon of the Broker pathway?

Lumian gazed at Jebus, in no hurry to comprehend the hidden box's abilities. He asked thoughtfully, "What's your connection to the Carbonari?"

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Chapter 716 Bullets

Jebus, who had been about to explain the meaning of "Under the Table," was caught off guard.

"We're putting in a lot of effort to keep the Carbonari in check and have made considerable headway."

The School of Truth member chuckled at that.

"They're attempting to topple the government and create their own system. That's precisely the outcome we hope to see."

Jenna thought Jebus's words didn't add up. "But don't you aim to slowly seize control of the government through high society individuals like Moran Avigny?"

Jebus laughed and adopted an instructive tone.

"A wise merchant wouldn't risk everything on a single venture. The same principle applies to exceptional Ambitionists."

Hearing this, Lumian abruptly shifted the topic.

"From what you've described, Ambitionists primarily enhance their bodies, perception, and spirituality. It doesn't appear to involve their intellect?"

Before Jebus could reply, Franca responded with a grin.

"Who says Ambitionists require intelligence? It's not the same as being a Conspirer. Ambitionists prioritize ambition over the capability to actually achieve it. Exceptional intelligence isn't a prerequisite for them. We've encountered many foolish ambitionists throughout history."

The pair's back-and-forth left Jebus speechless.

Fortunately, Lumian didn't dwell on the subject. He turned the conversation back to the Carbonari.

"Has Albert Goncourt already sided with you?"

"Most likely," Jebus answered uncertainly. "I don't handle the Carbonari."

"Was it because of you Brokers that the Dreamseekers charity group formed ties with the Carbonari?" Lumian thought of General Philip.

Jebus grinned again. "Philip was a man with grand aspirations who had long aimed to bring various secret organizations together. As Brokers, Shadow Merchants, and Ambitionists, we definitely had to help him. Regrettably, while his scheme was successful, others took advantage of him. He also disappeared in the ancient underground city. Incidentally, I'm not sure if you know, but it's actually Fourth Epoch Trier."

"You guys…" Franca had a thought but kept it to herself. She merely sighed.

Only then did Lumian inquire about Under the Table. "What extra capabilities do you gain at Sequence 5?"

Jebus kept his eyes fixed on the two Demonesses.

"Under the Table is the sole ability, but there are two ways to utilize it:

"The first is to establish an unseen and tranquil Under the Table atmosphere in combat and emergency scenarios. You can forcibly meet your demands by offering the enemy valuable items, but you can't injure them or impact their state in any other way. Additionally, you must behave normally. If not, the enemy who 'agreed' to the under-the-table deal can easily detect that something is amiss and snap out of it.

"Such Under the Table transactions aren't guaranteed to work. The target's inclination and experience in the gray domain determine the success rate. The Broker Sequence's Gray Perception ability can assess this. If you're up against an Unshadowed of the Sun pathway, success is nearly impossible even without the suppression of godhood."

Unshadowed referred to the Sun pathway's Sequence 4.

Lumian had a realization. "You previously made me release you through such an Under the Table transaction?"

"Correct," Jebus said frankly. "You have extensive experience with the gray domain and a strong inclination in that respect."

On Lumian's behalf, Franca complimented Jebus, saying, "You have a talent for reading people!"

"Gray Perception may be an ability acquired as a Sequence 9 Broker, but it's incredibly useful," Jebus bragged, seeming objective.

Jenna pressed, "And the other Under the Table transaction?"

Jebus answered with a smile, "That requires a certain amount of time. It's not suitable for combat or emergency situations.

"In simple terms, we'll utilize a barely sealed space as the operating target to create a genuine Under the Table scenario. We'll be on one side of the transaction under

this table. The mysterious creature or dangerous entity concealed in the shadows and darkness will be on the other side, but we won't know their identity beforehand. We also won't be able to sense who the other party is during the transaction. It could be an entity we've previously dealt with or one from the unknown.

"Essentially, in this Under the Table state, where you don't know the counter-party or how your needs will be fulfilled through the transaction, you can achieve the desired result by stating your request and offering the item the other party desires. How this is accomplished isn't relevant."

"Can the transaction only involve two parties?" Jenna asked inquisitively.

"No, it can be a three-way deal, a four-way deal, or even more. Just follow the Under the Table transaction rules." Jebus didn't hold back on sharing his mysticism knowledge. "The transaction may not succeed either. It depends on the task's difficulty and the limitations of the provided traded items. Also, don't assume those mysterious creatures and dangerous entities will honor their promises. There's no lack of con artists among them who can find ways to circumvent Under the Table's restrictions."

"Are there additional risks after using Under the Table to complete a particularly challenging task?" Jenna thought of her Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

Jebus nodded gravely.

"Yes, it depends on which mysterious creature or dangerous entity helped you and if it has malicious intentions. I once had a week of misfortune and was almost caught by the Purifiers."

Jenna nodded pensively and pondered inwardly: It seems the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction is a variant of the standard Under the Table ability. Instead of the counter-party making the requests, it's us offering something valuable. However, it can only simplify complex issues and ease difficult ones. It can't directly complete tasks. There are significant limitations…

The cost of using it is encountering a transaction involving Demons and other sinister beings…

"What information do you have about Overseers?" Lumian posed a new question when he noticed the Under the Table discussion was nearly over.

Jebus appeared troubled and didn't answer.

Seeing this, Lumian switched topics. "What items are you carrying?"

Jebus glanced at Franca and took out a few assorted items from his concealed pocket.

"This is a healing agent obtained from the Great Mother's believers. These are the Coma Gas, Awakening Gas, and Confession Concoction acquired from the Mother Tree of Desire's followers…"

Healing agents, sedatives, mysticism smelling salts, and truth serum. These are all precious items… Lumian gave a small nod at the four metal canisters with various labels.

His gaze then moved to Jebus's other palm, where six bullets rested.

The six bullets were brass, but their surface patterns and colors differed. One looked normal, one had a luminous tip, and one appeared to be corroded by potent acid. One flickered with a dark green light, one radiated a brilliant starlight, and another had a faint luster as if it had been matted many times.

Jebus introduced them with enthusiasm, "These are the Impregnating Bullet, Poison Bullet, Putrid Bullet, Weakening Bullet, Implosion Bullet, and Deprivation Bullet. I traded for them from various deity believers."

Intrigued, Franca pointed at the ordinary bullet from a distance. "Is this the Impregnating Bullet?"

"Indeed. People and animals shot by it will inevitably become pregnant, and the corresponding symptoms will swiftly manifest," Jebus said, a tinge of fear in his voice.

"It affects both males and females indiscriminately?" Franca inquired.

"Yes," Jebus said with certainty.

Huh… Franca made a sound conveying a mix of contempt, fear, and fascination.

Jenna asked worriedly, "It looks like a regular bullet. What if there's a mix-up?"

Jebus shook his head.

"You won't make that mistake. It's lightweight, as if made of wood or soil."

Phew… Lumian and Anthony let out a sigh of relief.

Lumian pointed at the matte bullet. "Is this the Deprivation Bullet? What does it do?"

The effects of the other bullets seemed straightforward, but Lumian wasn't sure about the Deprivation Bullet's purpose.

"Those struck or grazed by it will lose one Beyonder power within fifteen minutes. As for which one, it's unpredictable," Jebus answered honestly.

This can complement a Fate Appropriator's abilities of designating the Deprivation… Lumian appraised Jebus and asked, "Do you have any other items? As a Shadow Merchant, don't you possess any mystical objects?"

Jebus explained embarrassedly, "I recently received the Under the Table boon. To complete the corresponding ritual and please truth, I traded all the items I had acquired, leaving only these.

"A merchant's rule is that you can buy and sell anything!"

Poor slob… Franca mocked disappointedly.

She then said to Jebus, "Give us all these items. They're the very reason you've been repeatedly caught up in danger and deity-level conflicts. Hand them over, and you'll be free. Once you're safe, you can start anew."

Similar to Anthony's hypnotic words, Jebus chose to believe it and gave everything to Franca.

After Franca stowed away the items, Lumian surveyed the area and asked, "Where is the School of Truth's headquarters? Which Overseer do you report to?"

Hearing these two questions, Jenna, Franca, and Anthony quietly moved to Lumian's side.

Jebus hesitated for a few seconds and was about to respond when his expression suddenly twisted.

Seeing this, Lumian immediately said to Franca, "Toss the figurine over!"

Franca followed suit. She took out the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine from her Traveler's Bag and threw it to Jebus.

At the same time, she, Anthony, and Jenna grabbed Lumian's shoulders, arms, and other positions.

In the next instant, the four of them disappeared.

Boom!

Jebus exploded from the inside out, his shattered flesh merging with the pale-white fog, transforming into a peculiar blood mist.

The blood fog slowly descended, circling the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine before seeping into the soil.

After a few seconds, Lumian and the others teleported back.

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Chapter 717 Supervision?

□717 Supervision?

"Why did he just blow up like that?" Lumian muttered, frowning as he watched the blood slowly soaking into the soil. He gripped the carbide lamp tightly.

His two questions hadn't been intended to end Jebus's life. He had simply wanted to carefully test the limits, one step at a time.

Anthony calmly explained, "The fundamental rule of hypnosis is to never directly threaten the subject's life. So when Jebus was asked something that would seriously endanger him, he either would refuse to answer or the shock would jolt him awake, breaking the hypnotic hold."

"I was ready for the possibility of him breaking free from the hypnosis," Lumian said, having anticipated this outcome.

Jebus couldn't dodge the Spell of Harrumph at that range. Lumian also had three ritualistic dog skins and a cow hide in his Traveler's Bag.

Since becoming an Ascetic, he could now craft the mystical animal hides required for the Animal Creation Spell himself. So he had imbued extra powers into the ones he already possessed.

Thinking back on what had transpired, Jenna mused, "Jebus was going to answer at first… Meaning he didn't think those two questions would put his life at risk. Heh, guess things didn't play out like he expected."

Franca nodded."Exactly. If it was truly dangerous, he could've just stayed quiet.

"I assumed he was under some contract where revealing the School of Truth's headquarters or his direct Overseer's name would cause his shadow to attack his soul.

"Damn, what if his Overseer sneaked in extra terms when the contract was signed? Could that be why Jebus had no clue answering would be risky? Heavens, how tragic is that? Nothing but lies and trickery through and through—are we dealing with Swindlers or Brokers here?"

After Franca's lament, Lumian considered for a few moments.

"Overseer."

"Overseer?" Franca caught on immediately. "Overseeing subordinates is an Overseer ability, but Jebus didn't know that. Did he set off some forbidden conditions by answering key questions?"

Jenna snapped to attention.

"You think the Overseer spotted us already? Could they be on their way?"

"Unlikely. I had Franca leave the Primordial Demoness figurine here after noticing Jebus's strange reaction," Lumian said, smiling. "Even if we're right, the Overseer probably just detected an issue with Jebus, not our precise location. The real problem is we may need to change our plans going forward."

Jenna and Anthony understood what Lumian meant.

They weren't under imminent threat or at risk of the Overseer tracking them down. But something had happened to Jebus, who was guarding Moran Avigny in the mirror world. Once the Overseer realized, they would easily deduce that someone was after Moran Avigny and undoubtedly take action. The scheme they had so carefully devised probably no longer fit the new circumstances.

Franca sighed heavily, eyeing the bone figurine on the ground with genuine regret.

"I resisted when the Demoness of Black first gave me this figurine. Now I'm wishing she'd given me a dozen!"

Poking fun at herself, she stooped down to retrieve the Primordial Demoness figurine. She delicately cleaned it off and murmured appreciatively.

Lumian took stock of his own actions.

"I should've been watching how Jebus's fate tributary shifted using the Eye of Calamity. Maybe then I could've intervened in time to stop him from responding."

He hadn't anticipated Jebus being oblivious to which questions would violate a taboo. This wasn't about religious devotion or advanced mystical knowledge. Jebus ought to have known what he could and couldn't say. If not, his daily life would've been cut short many times over.

Franca remembered, "The School of Truth member Jenna and I ran into before had the same thing happen when we asked his organizational affiliation and why he was capitalizing on the gatekeeper vanishing.

"Based on Jebus's answer, stating 'the School of Truth' itself isn't forbidden. And I bet the guy who wasn't even an Ambitionist yet had no idea why he was exploiting the gatekeeper's absence.

"Seems it really is an Overseer ability after all. No wonder the taboos are fluid, with the context, mental state, and overall situation determining what crosses the line each time. The rules adapt to the circumstances. Heh, just like the ideology

Jebus described."

Lumian gave a small nod and laughed.

"Well, at least we secured the spoils early on. Would've been a huge waste otherwise."

He thought for a bit.

"Franca, contact the Demoness of Black with the charm later. Inform her about the fixed mirror world entrance we made, what occurred, and how Jebus reacted. See what she thinks and advises.

"Right, she's likely a Tamara from the Apprentice branch. No love lost between her and Moran Avigny, who defected from the Judgement branch."

Franca concurred, and Lumian turned to Jenna next. "Head to the safehouse and send word to Madam Judgment. The Judgement pathway stands for order, so I feel we must alert her to the School of Truth situation at once. I'll take you there."

"Got it." Jenna was accustomed to Lumian delegating tasks in moments like these.

Finally, Lumian addressed Anthony.

"Join me at the Pleasure Pavilion to await Moran Avigny's arrival. Watch him closely for any unusual behavior."

Situated on Avenue du Boulevard, the opulent Pavilion of Pleasure functioned as the Intis Republic's presidential estate. Moran Avigny was due to attend a ministerial meeting convened by the president there.

Anthony inclined his head slightly to convey his assent.

Observation was a Spectator's forte, after all.

…

Inside the quarry cave housing the mirror world's fixed entryway,

Franca leaned against the wall, her night vision active. She produced a compact and a charm fashioned from ashen stone.

Clasping the charm, Franca infused it with her spirituality. Reciting the Hermes activation phrase, she intoned,

"Eyes!"

Wreathed in obsidian flames, the rock-like grayish charm flared to life. Franca touched it to the compact's glass,

causing the mirror to lose solidity and turn incorporeal.

The burning charm sank through without resistance, vanishing from sight.

Moments later, Franca sensed a presence surround her.

A mass of dark locks then rose from the makeup mirror's surface.

The rippling black tresses obscured her view.

As the hair fully emerged, Franca tightened her grasp, and Clarice took form before her.

The Demoness of Black's own hair remained immaculately tied up, with no trace of the ominous raven strands.

Even having met her prior, Franca couldn't suppress a rush of awe at Clarice's allure.

The woman possessed a breathtaking beauty that effortlessly ensnared any who beheld her.

Clarice regarded Franca, her melodic voice gentle as she inquired, "You have an update?"

Composing herself, Franca detailed her suspicion of corruption seeping out of Underground Trier. She had ventured to a particular sector bearing the Primordial Demoness figurine, ultimately pinpointing the target site. She elaborated on beseeching the Primordial One via the figurine, obtaining a reply, and securing a permanent gateway to the mirror plane.

A rare glimmer of approval showed on Clarice's face. "Your instincts are sharp and your mind keen. Impressive that you conceived of and accomplished this. Perhaps you too shall rise to be a colored Demoness one day."

Demoness of Yellow? Franca grumbled to herself.

She went on to outline the scheme she had hatched with Lumian's crew, withholding specifics about the Tarot Club and portraying the Mirror Mark power as an item.

Clarice listened attentively without comment.

Franca recounted the offensive against Lumian amid his probe, his triumph over Jebus, and the bounty of intel gleaned through a Spectator.

The Demoness of Black nodded. "Your lovers are quite capable, the Hunter in particular."

Here Clarice smirked. "The taste of a Hunter isn't bad either. The higher their Sequence, the more intense and brave they grow."

Wh— Emperor, even an elite Demoness has perused your clandestine annals… Every Demoness probably owns an edition! Franca wavered between finding Emperor Roselle's plight humorous or pitiable.

"It certainly has its perks," Franca played along, smiling and trying to mask her chagrin.

The Demoness of Black proceeded, "However, both you and he erred.

"Upon amassing adequate knowledge, you should have ceased questioning without delay. The wiser course was to first ambush Moran Avigny, seize him, then interrogate further."

"Agreed." Franca accepted the Demoness of Black's reproach.

In hindsight, the location of the School of Truth's headquarters and the presiding Overseer's identity were not essential facts for their immediate needs. They could have morphed Jebus into a dog and set Lugano and Ludwig to guard him. While the Overseer remained unaware, she and the rest could have lurked within the mirror, poised for Moran Avigny to unwittingly enter of his own accord. Ample chances to take a second captive would have presented themselves down the line.

However, this was Lumian's style.

It had long been apparent to Franca that Lumian was predisposed to extracting intelligence on the spot. Only extraordinary reasons would induce him to postpone. As if he feared the slightest delay might thwart him from procuring otherwise obtainable insight.

Demoness of Black Clarice refrained from belaboring the point. Nodding, she declared, "Abide here for my return. I'll look into these developments, but it may require some time."

"As you wish, Madame Clarice." Franca made no effort to conceal her gratified smile.

…

Outside the dazzling Pavilion of Pleasure on Avenue du Boulevard, Lumian and Anthony seamlessly rejoined the throng of journalists.

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Chapter 718 Another Warning

□□Lumian and Anthony only had to wait briefly before the ministers began exiting the Pavilion of Pleasure one by one.

They quickly approached Moran Avigny, the Minister of Industry. While listening to the other reporters' questions, they employed their unique abilities to observe him closely.

After just over ten seconds, Lumian turned to Anthony and gave a small shake of his head,

indicating that, for now, there was nothing unusual about Moran's river of fate.

He trusted that Anthony, being a Spectator, would understand his unspoken message.

Anthony responded with a slight head shake of his own, confirming to Lumian that Moran Avigny's expression and behavior appeared normal.

Has the Overseer directly responsible for Jebus not reached out to Moran Avigny? Or could our assumption be incorrect? Is it possible that Jebus's death wasn't detected by the Overseer's monitoring? Have they not fully grasped the situation with Jebus? These thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he continued his observation.

This was precisely why he had come in person to the Pavilion of Pleasure to await Moran Avigny's appearance.

Only by acquiring the most current and reliable information could he assess whether to move forward with the original plan, adjust it, or temporarily set it aside!

Indeed, within Moran Avigny's river of fate, a tributary of him entering the full-body mirror in the study still exists, shrouded in an intense black hue… Lumian, unconcerned about the drain on his spirituality, maintained his focus on any potential shifts in Moran Avigny's destiny.

Following a short interview, the debonair Minister of Industry, flanked by his bodyguards, descended the steps of the Pavilion of Pleasure and headed towards his stylish four-wheeled, four-seater carriage.

As the valet opened the carriage door, Moran Avigny pulled out a small hand mirror from his pocket, seemingly checking his appearance.

In Trier's high society, this was a typical occurrence. Men's cosmetics and grooming had long been in vogue.

Moran Avigny peered into the hand mirror, his dark-gray pupils abruptly widening as his expression subtly changed.

Nearly simultaneously, Lumian, with his silver-black eyes, detected a notable alteration in the Minister of Industry's fate tributary.

None of the tributaries suggested Moran Avigny's entry into the study's full-body mirror!

All relevant "choices" had vanished!

As a result, even if Lumian depleted nearly half of his spirituality and employed Compelling Fate, he would be unable to force Moran Avigny to "willingly" enter the study's full-body mirror.

Compelling Fate wasn't about creating destiny; choices had to exist before they could be compelled!

Taking advantage of the moment when the reporters had shifted their focus and the two of them were slowly trailing behind, Anthony quietly said to Lumian, "When Moran Avigny looked at himself in the hand mirror, he experienced a palpable sense of fear."

As Lumian followed the other reporters, he continued to assess Moran Avigny and formed a related hypothesis.

Someone was utilizing the mirror world and the hand mirror to convey a message to Moran Avigny!

The transmitted information likely pertained to the mysterious demise of Jebus Lata, who was tasked with guarding the study's full-body mirror, and the disappearance of his body.

For Moran Avigny, this implied that someone was conspiring against him. The shadow was already looming over him, its source and circumstances unknown.

Under such conditions, fear was inevitable. For the majority of people, emotions would inevitably manifest to some degree in their facial expressions and physical movements, making them readily apparent to Spectators.

Yes, given that Jebus possessed a Mirror Cufflink, it's reasonable to assume that the Overseer above him would have comparable items. They might even possess the additional capability to communicate via the mirror world… Lumian recalled, thinking of the glass cufflink now in Franca's possession. Moreover, Jebus had disclosed that Moran Avigny had instructed the other Mirror People from the Tamara family to assume new identities and relocate, leaving him as the sole contact with the School of Truth.

Consequently, when the Overseer discovered Jebus's unexplained disappearance and ultimate death, they would be unable to reach the other Mirror People. They could only await the conclusion of Moran Avigny's ministerial meeting to send him a warning.

Our prior conjectures have been validated. The Overseer did indeed detected Jebus's death. Whether the Overseer was limited by his abilities or hindered by the Primordial Demoness figurine is uncertain, but he was unable to immediately locate us and launch a counterattack…

We must abandon the original plan. Getting Moran Avigny to 'willingly' enter the study's full-body mirror is no longer feasible…

Lost in thought, Lumian watched as Moran Avigny tucked away the hand mirror, boarded the carriage, and headed home.

Taking advantage of the still somewhat chaotic scene, he and Anthony discreetly left the Pavilion of Pleasure.

At the periphery of a square adorned with statues and obelisks, Lumian scanned his surroundings. Confirming that no one was nearby, he murmured to Anthony, "What do you think frightened Moran Avigny?"

He had already shared his theory with Anthony.

Drawing on his Spectator perspective, Anthony endeavored to analyze the psychological states of the School of Truth and Moran Avigny.

"Without intel on the enemy, it's improbable that the School of Truth, a secret organization worshiping an evil deity, would dispatch additional demigod-level operatives to Moran Avigny's proximity to enhance protection for the Mirror People. Unlike an orthodox Church, they can't afford to act rashly and perpetually escalate their involvement. They must consider the possibility that the group that apprehended Jebus is equally formidable, potentially including a demigod in their ranks. They might even suspect that this could be a covert mission orchestrated by the Purifier, Machinery Hivemind, or an elite unit from Bureau 8.

"In essence, the Overseer will convey to Moran Avigny that he's now on his own. They'll offer indirect support but can't intervene directly.

"Other cults might react with insanity, extremism, and irrationality while still defending Moran Avigny. However, based on Jebus's ideology, the School of Truth will refrain from such actions."

"That explains why Moran Avigny couldn't conceal his fear. It's tantamount to being forsaken." Lumian gently nodded.

Anthony continued his analysis.

"We must also take into account Moran Avigny's unique characteristic as a Mirror Person.

"The Mirror People we've previously encountered not only pursued their own ambitions but also exhibited a certain zealotry towards their leader and overarching objectives.

"Based on my observations, while Moran Avigny is undeniably terrified, he managed to exercise some restraint. Upon entering the carriage, he appeared resolute and determined."

Lumian comprehended and remarked, "Is he contemplating self-sacrifice? He'll promptly alert the other Mirror People and urge them to swiftly conceal themselves. As for himself, he's under the strict protection of officials, rendering escape impossible. His only option is to remain in place, visible to the enemy faction, hoping that his fortune is sufficient and the official protection proves effective.

"Heh heh, in times like these, protection becomes another form of confinement."

Anthony shifted the topic. "Which tributary turned black following the change in Moran Avigny's fate?"

Lumian shook his head. "Nothing at present. This is an exceptionally unique situation. It signifies that it will manifest only when Moran Avigny makes a new choice, branching into a new fate tributary."

At this juncture, Lumian exhaled slowly and stated, "I don't perceive any other opportunities at the moment. It would have been good if the Overseer had acted rashly and protected Moran Avigny. The Demoness of Black should be awaiting him. Hmm, let's locate Jenna and Franca first."

…

In the quarry cave housing a permanent entrance to the mirror world, Franca, who had been patiently waiting, witnessed black hair reemerge from the mirror, descending strand by strand.

Demoness of Black Clarice materialized and spoke softly, "Currently, no Beyonders are concealed behind the relevant mirror. They must have abandoned Moran Avigny.

"I'm unable to provide assistance at this time. You must reevaluate your strategy and devise a means to capture Moran Avigny, who is under the robust protection of official Beyonders, without entering the mirror world."

Do you have a solution in mind? Franca wished to inquire but refrained out of concern for offending the Demoness of Black. Instead, she simply replied, "Understood."

…

In a secure safe house within the administrative district, Jenna informed Lumian and Anthony, "Madame Judgment has instructed us to halt further action for now. She needs to confer with the other Major Arcana card holders regarding the information obtained from Jebus."

With Ma'am Hermit? Lumian pondered silently, immersed in thought.

He gave a small nod and said, "Let's go find Franca."

After rendezvousing with Franca in the subterranean quarry cave and sharing their discoveries, Lumian sighed and declared, "For the time being, we have no choice but to abandon our efforts."

As Franca and the others nodded in agreement, Lumian suddenly heard a resounding voice.

"Don't you believe you're capitulating prematurely?

"Did you fail to notice any issues?"

Termiboros… Why is He offering me guidance? And it's not an urgent matter that threatens Him? Lumian couldn't help but furrow his brow.

Termiboros's profound voice persisted, "Consider this. If you were an Overseer, what actions would you take in such a scenario?"

"Naturally, they would reduce personnel and conceal themselves to prevent the enemy from discovering clues and pursuing them…" Lumian muttered under his breath. "Beyond this, what else can they do? How can they indirectly aid Moran Avigny?"

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony observed Lumian as he mumbled to himself, awaiting his ultimate explanation.

Abruptly, a possibility occurred to Lumian.

He gazed at his three companions and said in a low, serious tone, "Under the Table Transaction!"

"Safeguard Moran Avigny through a high-level Under the Table transaction!"

"That's why we each abandoned the plan for distinct reasons. Even the river of fate currently shows no death calamity for Moran Avigny!"

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Chapter 719 Advancing

□□"We were under the influence of an Under the Table transaction?" Franca carefully reviewed the entire situation but couldn't find anything out of the ordinary. The only thing that stood out was that the Demoness of Black probably had a way to quickly extract Moran Avigny while he was under the protection of an official Beyonder team. She clearly knew how to exploit the mirror world, yet she burdened everything upon her.

Of course, her actions made sense when put into context. Even though Moran Avigny's security detail consisted of Mid-Sequence Beyonders, this was Trier, the capital of the Intis Republic. It was a diocese of great importance to both the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the God of Steam and Machinery Church. Numerous demigods were posted there, ready to intervene at a moment's notice. If the Demoness of Black couldn't end the fight quickly and eliminate all witnesses, she would face severe repercussions. Official Beyonders might even track her using specialized Sealed Artifacts.

If something happened to her, the Demoness Sect's Trier branch would be dealt a crippling blow. In a situation like this, it would be wiser for her to assign a capable member of middling rank to handle the matter while she focused on damage control. If things went south, she could easily cut ties with Franca and her lovers.

This assumed, of course, that Moran Avigny wasn't valuable enough for the Demoness Sect to go to great lengths to eliminate him. If he were, the sect would have evacuated non-essential personnel beforehand and assembled high-ranking, color-named Demonesses in Trier.

"I think there's an issue here. It's not that we shouldn't or can't abandon the mission, but rather that we gave up far too readily and hastily," Anthony remarked, analyzing the situation from a human behavioral standpoint.

Franca nodded pensively and added, "Indeed. The Demoness of Black only briefly verified the absence of hidden Beyonders behind the mirror in question before concluding that Moran Avigny had been abandoned and would receive no further assistance."

"That's way too rushed and convenient," Jenna commented.

After a moment's hesitation, she asked, "Was Madam Judgment affected as well?"

"It's possible." Lumian glanced down at his chest.

Lowering his voice, he asked, "Termiboros, why weren't you impacted? Is it because you're an Angel?"

Termiboros's imposing voice echoed within Lumian's body.

"It's hard to say for certain. It could also be due to The Fool's seal. While the seal does limit me, it can also serve as a safeguard under certain circumstances."

Similar to Naboredisley's Abomination corpse? The Overseer's Under the Table transaction couldn't breach Mr. Fool's seal, so it had no effect on Termiboros? Lumian nodded in understanding and said to Jenna, "We need to inform Madam Judgment of our suspicions. If an Under the Table transaction is indeed at play, she'll undoubtedly break free of its influence and offer new guidance once alerted. If she's unaffected, the messenger will just have to put in a bit of extra effort.

"Got it." Jenna grasped Lumian's point. "Even though we suspect an Under the Table transaction, we can't act recklessly right now. We still require fresh directives from the Major Arcana cardholders."

As Franca waited for Madam Judgment's reply, she let out a sigh.

"Is something wrong?" Jenna inquired, her worry apparent.

Franca responded with a mix of sorrow and outrage, "This Under the Table transaction was exceptionally lavish. It impacted no fewer than two demigods. The Overseer of the School of Truth must have paid a steep price and offered up a considerable number of precious items."

Sure, that's all true, but what's it got to do with you? Why are you so worked up about it? Jenna blinked, struggling to grasp Franca's train of thought.

Franca elaborated, "Once Madam Judgment apprehends or eliminates him with our assistance, there won't be much left in terms of spoils of war for us to divvy up.

"We might end up with another penniless target like Jebus!"

Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony were momentarily at a loss for words.

You're already worrying about hypothetical future spoils?

Lumian shifted the topic and turned to Franca and Jenna.

"When I posed those final two questions to Jebus, why did you two lean in closer to me? Did you sense that something was about to go awry?"

"Naturally, it was a Demoness's intuitive premonition," Franca declared smugly. "While I couldn't pinpoint what exactly would happen, being nearer to you provided me with more options for dealing with potential threats."

Jenna gave a subtle nod, indicating that she felt the same way.

Lumian faced Anthony. "What about you?"

Anthony answered honestly, "I suspected that the last two questions would snap Jebus out of his hypnotic state. Franca and Jenna's reactions indirectly validated my concerns.

"Given that, it seemed prudent to take cover behind you two."

"So you're using us as human shields?" Franca remarked with a wry smile.

Anthony nodded earnestly. "You two have Mirror Substitution at your disposal."

"Fair point," Franca conceded.

After a short while, Madam Judgment's messenger delivered a response. The message was succinct: "Proceed with your course of action."

Does this imply that the Major Arcana cardholders will monitor the situation? Have they consulted with Ma'am Hermit? Lumian nodded thoughtfully and grinned at Franca and the others.

"Let's stick to our initial plan."

"The initial plan?" Franca started, taken aback.

"Precisely," Lumian confirmed, still smiling. "Over the next several hours, potentially even a full day, the Overseer and the other Mirror People certainly won't be guarding Moran Avigny from behind the full-length mirror in his study. That should be a necessary condition for the Under the Table transaction to succeed. The Demoness of Black has already inspected those locations, and the Overseer is unaware of when she might do so again. He needs to allow sufficient time.

"Put another way, if we conceal ourselves within that mirror, we'll be safe from disruption and harm."

Jenna's brow furrowed slightly.

"But doesn't the heart of the issue lie in the fact that Moran Avigny won't be entering the full-length mirror anytime soon? How can we ambush him..."

Jenna abruptly trailed off, as if a thought had just occurred to her.

Lumian's grin widened. "The Overseer may resort to an Under the Table transaction, but so can we!"

"Indeed, the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction!" Franca immediately grasped Lumian's implication.

Lumian planned to harness the Authority Holder's Under-the-

table Transaction to plant the idea in Moran Avigny's mind to re-enter the full-length mirror!

As for how an Under the Table transaction would enable such an arrangement to work, that wasn't their concern. Even the Overseer probably didn't know the inner workings of the Under the Table transaction.

Under the Table dealings were, in a sense, a black box!

With Magic Mirror Divination verifying the level of risk, Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony ventured into the enigmatic and shadowy realm via the mirror world entrance affixed to the jutting rock.

Surveying the spiderweb-like void passageways stretching to unknown destinations, Lumian activated the Mirror Mark contract imprinted on him.

He then addressed Franca and the others, "I can detect the full-length mirror and determine its precise whereabouts."

"In that case, let's make our way there immediately." Franca pulled up her Assassin suit's hood once more and latched onto Lumian's arm.

She had already donned the Mirror Cufflink, but why squander one of its uses when other means were available?

As soon as Jenna and Anthony grabbed hold of him again, Lumian triggered the Spirit World Traversal mark and teleported through one of the dark, vacant passageways to a deep, black aqueous light.

The aqueous light signified a mirror with a corresponding hazy zone linked to myriad illusory tunnels akin to spiderwebs.

Lumian peered into the dark aqueous light and observed the scene through the glass mirror. It was undoubtedly Moran Avigny's study.

Franca likewise recognized the target's position and breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'll handle the Under the Table transaction."

"Allow me." Lumian smiled. "Given what transpired earlier, I might encounter Demons even without the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction. In that case, I might as well use it freely."

He was alluding to the events surrounding Naboredisley.

"Very well." Franca yielded to Lumian's reasoning. "Then I'll cover the cost!"

She produced 5,000 verl d'or worth of gold from her Traveler's Bag.

Lumian accepted without protest and said to Jenna and the others, "The transaction I aim to complete is to instill in Moran Avigny the notion of entering the full-length mirror in his study. Then, I'll employ Compelling Fate to transform that notion into reality.

"This is far simpler than directly compelling Moran Avigny to enter the mirror. The price will undoubtedly be lower."

"Understood." Jenna retrieved the Authority Holder's Under-

the-table Transaction from her backpack.

The small, dark wooden box still had eight uses remaining.

Lumian grasped Franca's pouch of gold coins in his right hand and reached through the membrane-like "curtain."

He then felt five damp, wrinkled fingers. They swiftly closed around the pouch containing the gold coins.

Lumian's expression remained neutral as he articulated his request in Hermes.

After a brief pause, the wrinkled, moist palm returned the pouch of gold coins.

Wh— Lumian glanced up and apprised Franca and the others of the development.

Franca promptly understood. "It's demanding more money!"

Her heart sank as she produced additional banknotes and gold, but the slightly cold, wrinkled palm kept rejecting the payment.

Lumian contributed tens of thousands of verl d'or, yet the transaction still wouldn't go through.

"Could it be that Under the Table doesn't desire money or gold?" Jenna recalled Jebus's insights regarding the Broker pathway.

"Perhaps it requires a mystical item?" Lumian pondered, considering what he could offer.

Franca deliberated for a moment before suggesting, "What about the Blood Gold ring? It has considerable drawbacks, and we've hardly used it."

The Blood Gold ring had come from Mad Lady and corresponded to some of the capabilities of a Sequence 6 Rose Bishop of the Secrets Suppliant pathway.

The four of them conferred for a while before deciding to attempt the transaction with the Blood Gold ring.

The moment the Blood Gold ring touched Under the Table, the five fingers of the palm clenched firmly and withdrew, taking the ring with them.

This indicated that the deal had been finalized.

Phew… Lumian exhaled in relief and remarked, "I'm curious to see how the Under the Table transaction will unfold…"

Franca pressed a hand to her chest and prayed to Mr. Fool, "Please don't let us run into any swindlers. Praise The Fool!"

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Chapter 720 Unexpected "Helper"

The word "swindler" hung in the air, leaving Lumian and the others in stunned silence as similar thoughts raced through their minds.

Surely they couldn't be that unlucky, right?

Jebus had warned them about the possibility of running into swindlers during an Under the Table deal, but Franca's previous experiences with Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction had always been reliable. Plus, the Blood Gold ring had been accepted this time around.

If Lumian hadn't been personally overseeing the transaction, he would've used the Eye of Calamity to assess the likelihood of it being finalized and look for ways to interfere.

But for now, the four of them had no choice but to wait patiently. Hidden behind the dark, watery light, they watched the scene unfolding in the study through the glass mirror.

As the night wore on, Lumian and his companions nibbled on the rations he'd packed for Ludwig in his Traveler's Bag to keep their hunger at bay.

Close to 10 p.m., Moran Avigny strode into the study, leaving the wooden door wide open. He sank into an armchair beneath the gas wall lamp, grabbed a book from a nearby pile, and began casually flipping through it.

The Purifier team tasked with his protection remained stationed at the door as usual, never setting foot inside.

Moran Avigny had always insisted on this arrangement. He'd even signed contracts with the Purifiers, Machinery Hivemind members, and Bureau 8 team, acknowledging that he was willing to take on the associated risks.

The security detail understood. A politician's study likely concealed all sorts of shady secrets. Keeping people with Beyonder powers from entering was a way for Moran Avigny to protect himself.

As was his custom, Moran Avigny left the study door open instead of shutting it, making it simpler for the Purifiers to keep an eye out for any potential trouble.

While perusing the books, Moran Avigny would occasionally glance up at the full-length mirror positioned just out of the Purifiers' line of sight, his thoughts seemingly far away.

At the same time, Lumian's eyes, hidden within the mirror, glinted a silvery-black.

Peering through the glass, he studied Moran Avigny's river of fate.

Looking closer, he confirmed that the Minister of Industry had indeed gained several new fate tributaries involving stepping into the full-length mirror. One of them was even cloaked in a thick, black hue.

Seizing the moment when Moran Avigny ducked his head to resume reading, Lumian slowly reached his right palm out from the mirror, pressing it firmly against the glass as if it were merely a reflection.

Then, he unleashed his remaining spirituality, transforming it into a raging, phantom river that surged toward the mercury stream symbolizing Moran Avigny's fate from a few meters away.

The main trunk of Moran Avigny's fate swallowed up the other tributaries and rushed into the dense, black one.

Compelling Fate!

Channeling the spirituality he'd accumulated using his Ascetic abilities, Lumian quickly withdrew his palm to avoid tipping off Moran Avigny.

He gave Franca and the others a nod, signaling that both the Under the Table deal and his Compelling of Fate had been successful.

As for the exact way Moran Avigny would embark on this fated path, Lumian couldn't say. The details were beyond his sight.

Franca and Jenna let out sighs of relief.

Not daring to speak lest they alert Moran Avigny, who possessed mirror-related abilities, they shared their understanding with Lumian through gratified smiles and relaxed nods.

They retreated to their positions, preparing for the upcoming ambush.

Just as fate was being compelled, Moran Avigny's spirituality abruptly sensed a warning, filling him with a feeling of impending danger.

The mirror message he'd received at dusk sprang to mind, and he started to suspect that the unknown enemy the Overseer had mentioned was plotting something that could put his life at risk.

Unable to resist, Moran Avigny glanced at the full-length mirror once more, debating whether to flee into it and abandon this place before the Purifiers had a chance to react. He yearned to shed his current identity and vanish completely from the hidden enemy's radar.

Fighting back his impulses, he turned his head to look at the Purifiers standing guard at the door.

There could be a trap lurking behind the mirror. His best bet was to pray that the official Beyonders would be able to shield him!

This is Trier, and I'm a minister of the country!

Right then, his valet appeared at the door, carrying a glass of warm milk.

Drinking warm milk before showering and brushing his teeth was part of Moran Avigny's nightly routine to help him sleep.

The Purifiers carried out their standard checks before permitting the valet to enter the study.

"Your milk, Sir," the valet said deferentially, extending a white porcelain cup brimming with the liquid.

Moran Avigny had made immense contributions to Intis's industrial growth and had been awarded the Legion of Honor medal, earning him the rank of Knight.

Nodding his head slightly, Moran Avigny reached out his right hand to accept the glass.

All of a sudden, he noticed his valet's eyes cloud over, an indescribable agony lurking in their depths.

A heartbeat later, the valet's mouth flew open and he vomited.

What he spat out was a solid, writhing chunk of blood-colored flesh, hurled directly at Moran Avigny!

The flesh swiftly ballooned, morphing into a cloak of flesh and blood that wrapped around Moran Avigny. It wriggled inward, seemingly trying to force its way into the Minister of Industry's body.

In the mirror, Lumian was stunned.

This aura…

It's Mr. K!

Why had he shown up out of nowhere to try to assassinate Moran Avigny?

With a sharp crack, Moran Avigny, cocooned in the flesh-and-

blood cloak, transformed into a mirror and shattered.

Nearly simultaneously, the Purifiers at the door sprang into action. A column of pure light wreathed in flames plummeted from the sky, bathing the cloak and causing it to visibly start melting.

Witnessing this, Moran Avigny spun around without hesitation and lunged at the mirror nearest to him.

He had already revealed Mirror Substitution to the Purifiers. Short of eliminating every witness without a trace, he would undoubtedly face intense scrutiny later on and lose the protection of the contract.

His only option was to take advantage of this chance to escape through the mirror world while the Purifiers tangled with the assassin!

As he watched Moran Avigny's figure loom larger and nearer to the full-length mirror, a thought abruptly struck Lumian.

Could this be fate?

He instantly retreated and disappeared.

A moment later, Moran Avigny's figure passed through the mirror, emerging behind the hazy, shadowy, and nearly vacant looking glass.

The Purifiers outside were shocked to see this. At the same time, they grasped that something was seriously wrong with the target under their protection.

Their attention wavered briefly. Taking advantage of the distraction, Mr. K changed Grazing targets and teleported away from Moran Avigny's residence.

In the space behind the mirror, Moran Avigny didn't linger. He promptly activated Mirror Traversal, rapidly changing positions to throw off any would-be pursuers.

Just then, he felt his body grow inexplicably heavier, his movements oddly constricted, stopping him from successfully slipping into an empty, dark tunnel.

It was as though someone had seized him.

Right after that, Moran Avigny sensed invisible threads coiling around his limbs and torso, layer upon layer.

With his Sheriff powers, he pinpointed the source of the sinister threads. They were close by.

Moran Avigny angled his head marginally and peered at an empty corner. His eyes flashed with two blinding "lightning bolts."

Psychic Piercing!

The "lightning" lanced out, hitting the empty spot. A sharp cracking rang out, scattering shards of shattered mirrors.

At the same instant, Jenna, dressed in a black gown and veiled bonnet, materialized behind Moran Avigny, gripping a small, elegant revolver.

Bang!

She squeezed the trigger, targeting Moran Avigny's vest.

The yellow bullet, wreathed in silent black flames, struck the target's body with precision at close range.

Crack! Moran Avigny deployed Mirror Substitution yet again.

As broken mirrors rained down, his figure rematerialized in a different corner of the hazy space. Franca and Jenna vanished without a trace.

Feeling the intangible threads enveloping him, Moran Avigny thrust out his right palm and intoned in ancient Hermes, "Invisibility is prohibited here!"

The instant he uttered the final word, innumerable transparent spider silks undulated throughout the area, resembling seaweed blanketing a section of ocean. Franca, garbed as an Assassin, and Jenna, clad in dark attire, circled or advanced, respectively, poised to strike again.

Realizing that the two foes couldn't touch him for the moment and that the invisible spider silk hadn't constricted, Moran Avigny had no time for a counterattack. He immediately sought to use Mirror Traversal to flee the area.

Out of nowhere, Moran Avigny's eyes bulged, his expression contorting with viciousness.

His body shattered once more, assuming the shape of a mirror.

Not far off, Anthony Reid, dressed like a veteran, "appeared."

He had just cast Frenzy on Moran Avigny!

The Prohibition of Invisibility rule didn't constrain him since he wasn't invisible. However, Moran Avigny himself hadn't been looking in Anthony's direction!

After employing Mirror Substitution multiple times, Moran Avigny rematerialized on the far side of the space, putting distance between himself and Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

Grasping that yet another enemy had entered the fray, he fled with intensified urgency.

Right as Moran Avigny was poised to activate Mirror Traversal, Franca lowered her hood, unveiling her radiant, refined features.

As she did, the diamond necklace adorning her neck emitted a subtle glow.

Beatrice's Necklace!

Moran Avigny's body flushed with heat, his gaze magnetized to Franca's lake-blue eyes, her high, delicate nose bridge, her fair, flawless skin, and her lush, crimson lips. For an instant, his desire to escape slipped his mind.

The activation of Beatrice's Necklace didn't pose a direct threat to Moran Avigny's life, so it failed to trigger Mirror Substitution. Moran Avigny lacked the time to deploy it himself. His cravings had already swelled beyond his control!

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Chapter 721 Exhausting the Substitutes

A Demoness of Pleasure didn't possess an innately proactive charm, but she could maximize her allure to irresistible levels. Even under normal circumstances, her magnetism could make most men unable to shift their gazes away, their breathing growing labored as their minds raced with desire. Moran Avigny had certainly never been an Ascetic, and his lust was already inflamed by Beatrice's Necklace.

His focus was solely locked on Franca now, imagination running wild with tantalizing possibilities of what might happen next.

Heart pounding, blood surging, his movements were affected—swift but erratic.

A dawn-like glow emanated from Moran's body, marking Franca as the target of his righteous punishment. This enhanced his influence and offensive power against the tempting demoness.

As he selected her for punishment, Moran seemed to grow taller in Franca's eyes, striking fear into her heart. She sensed he was a formidable figure who could end her existence with a mere thought.

She broke invisibility and tried to quickly shift positions.

Seizing the opportunity, Moran thrust out his right hand, breathing hot and heavy, and spoke an ancient Hermes incantation: "Imprison!"

Viscous amber liquid surged forth, enveloping Franca and freezing the demoness in place within a colossal transparent prison.

Crack!

Franca's form shattered, transforming into a palm-sized makeup mirror.

This allowed her to escape the Disciplinary Paladin's Imprison.

Suddenly, powerful danger premonition gripped Moran. Straining his enhanced physique, he broke free of the intangible spider silk ensnaring him and dove to the side.

Jenna's ice spike wreathed in unholy black flames narrowly missed its mark as she struck with all her might from the diagonal flank.

Moran's eyes flicked to the Witch in her dark dress and bonnet. He couldn't help but think she was quite appealing too.

Why not have both?

Dropping to one knee, Moran reached out towards Jenna and bellowed another Hermes invocation: "Confinement!"

Wordlessly, an immaterial wall materialized around Jenna, impenetrable even to her Spirit Body.

Rather than adhering directly to her, it generated a transparent cell with her at its center, thwarting any attempt at Mirror Substitution.

Taking note of this, Jenna opted not to strike the unseen barrier. Instead, she enveloped herself in a layer of frost.

Beyond the frost was another layer of frost—a delicate vacuum formed, transforming Jenna into a frozen statue.

"Confinement!"

Moran Avigny didn't immediately press his advantage against Jenna. His bloodshot eyes fixed on Franca as he confined the space surrounding the Demoness of Pleasure.

Franca remained unresponsive as black flames surged forth from her form.

Outside the black blaze, strata of frost coalesced, fashioning a translucent, sturdy sarcophagus.

Transparent spider silk wound around her, cocooning the frost in spirals.

Wh— Moran Avigny, though perplexed by the Demoness of Pleasure's peculiar behavior, took satisfaction in the success of his Confinement, circumventing the effects of Mirror Substitution.

His movements somewhat warped, he lunged at Franca. His mind raced with the powers he would unleash next and the consequences of bringing her under his control.

He had almost forgotten the presence of the Spectator, but Anthony had slipped into a blind spot.

No matter, I'll subdue the two Demonesses first! The instant this notion crossed Moran Avigny's mind, a faintly piercing melody abruptly resounded in his ears.

Lumian stepped out from the corner shadows, the black Symphony of Hatred bone flute at his lips.

Prohibition of Invisibility hadn't compelled him to reveal himself, as he wasn't invisible to begin with. He had merely shape-shifted into a shadow being, blending with the shadows!

Lumian studied Moran Avigny's face, twisted by desire. Approaching with a grin, he played the melody with intensified vigor.

Given Moran Avigny's state, he was certain the Symphony of Hatred's exploitation of vulnerabilities would undeniably inflame the other's cravings. Employing his Fate Appropriator's abilities in tandem was unnecessary.

Amid the lively, cutting music, Moran Avigny's body abruptly went rigid.

With a cracking noise, he invoked Mirror Substitution to endure the nearly lethal assault on his behalf.

Moran Avigny's silhouette manifested behind Lumian, but Lumian's performance persisted, and the nigh-explosive lust gripping Moran Avigny remained unabated.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Moran Avigny's form repeatedly fractured like a mirror, rematerializing in the ever-quickening melody. He couldn't flee the vicinity, nor could he spare a moment to obstruct his hearing.

The captivating strains of the Symphony of Hatred permeated every nook of the space behind the mirror.

Anthony crouched in a corner, employing a prop he had readied beforehand to shield his ears. He was set to bank on the mirror to induce a trance and plunge into deep sleep, thus evading Lumian's lethal melody that spared neither friend nor foe.

Despite his preparations, grayish-white dragon scales involuntarily surfaced on his skin.

Crack! Crack! Moran Avigny's Mirror Substitution had at last been exhausted.

His mind reeled, and he experienced overwhelming pleasure, a surge of euphoria.

His frame shuddered with pain and rapture.

Blood seeped from his nostrils, eyes, ears, and mouth. His saliva, mucus, and tears streamed all at once, as though he teetered on the brink of collapse.

Lumian appeared behind him, lowered the Symphony of Hatred, and snorted.

Twin beams of white light struck Moran Avigny, plunging the Disciplinary Paladin into unconsciousness.

Lumian afforded Moran Avigny no opportunity to harness his unique powers to rouse himself. He produced a ritualistic dog skin from his Traveler's Bag and draped it over the gradually crumpling foe's head.

"Dog!" Lumian declared in Hermes.

With a shadowy flash, Moran Avigny vanished, supplanted by an enormous dog with tawny fur.

Amid the intangible thud of the dog collapsing to the ground, it lay insensible on its flank.

Lumian smiled, stooped down, and scooped up the dog.

Witnessing this, Anthony dislodged the gag that had wholly covered his ears, and Jenna shed the dual layers of frost encasing her.

Franca lagged slightly. After a handful of seconds, the cocoon ruptured, and the ice coffin noiselessly dissipated, prompting the black flames to disperse.

She regarded Lumian and Jenna with astonishment and delight, stating, "My Pleasure potion underwent substantial digestion!"

No sooner had she concluded her statement than she pinched her nose and surveyed the spot where Moran Avigny had stood and the massive dog cradled in Lumian's arms.

"I know what's going on… He must have just savored genuine pleasure—utmost pleasure. Moreover, this 'pleasure' stemmed from me."

Lumian deliberated momentarily before replying, "He even staked his life to remain in pursuit of the pleasure you bestowed upon him, weathering the same excruciating agony. Ultimately, he attained the pleasure he coveted, albeit not in the manner he desired. He paid the steepest price for it."

"He's also a Beyonder on par with Sequence 5," Franca remarked with a wistful smile. "Regrettably, I wasn't the one wielding the Symphony of Hatred; otherwise, my Pleasure potion might have been fully digested. Pleasure begets pain, and pleasure lures people into depravity. Pleasure is akin to a candle flame to a moth…"

At this juncture, she lowered her voice and mumbled in an unfamiliar tongue, "Lust is a dangerous game…"

Franca harbored no excessive regrets. Among them, only Lumian could shoulder the adverse cost of the Symphony of Hatred.

Anthony scanned the environs and serenely prompted Franca, "Since we've succeeded, let's leave quickly."

Jenna had already drawn near to Lumian, who had likewise stowed away the Symphony of Hatred.

"Okay." Franca nodded and took several paces to Lumian's side, grasping his upper arm.

Concurrently, black flames ignited behind the mirror.

Within seconds, the quartet emerged from the fixed portal to the mirror world in the quarry cave. Franca finalized the anti-

divination and anti-prophecy measures.

Subsequently, they teleported back to the secured residence in the administrative district.

Franca sighed. "Beatrice's Necklace can no longer trigger Lust…"

Beatrice's Necklace could only trigger such desires twice. The inaugural target of Lust was Gardner Martin.

For Demoness Franca, this signified the loss of a potent auxiliary means.

Jenna nodded slightly. "How unfortunate. It appears the Demoness of Pleasure and the Sex Addict of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway can forge an ideal and efficacious partnership."

"Indeed. Unfortunately, I cannot obtain the Mother Tree of Desire's boon. Otherwise…" Franca abruptly fell silent, and an identical phrase flitted through the minds of Lumian and the others: Sex Addict Demoness!

Clearing her throat twice, Franca said, "I can only hope that the bestowed of the Mother Tree of Desire will bestow comparable props."

She turned to the enfeebled dog, who had yet to stir, and contemplated briefly before proposing, "Administer truth serum to him first, then have Anthony befriend him as a two-

pronged approach? Yes, employ the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell as a precautionary step…"

Lumian nodded, recollecting the "criticism" the Demoness of Black had leveled at Franca. Quelling his avarice, he said, "No need to rush. I'll question him after visiting Mr. K. Mr. K must have his motives for abruptly targeting Moran Avigny for assassination. Only by consulting him can we extract more pertinent intelligence later."

Franca and the others nodded in concurrence. "Agreed."

…

19 Rue Scheer, Psychic Magazine headquarters.

Lumian alighted from the carriage, attired in a light-blue cotton shirt following a change of clothing, and entered the six-story white luxurious residence.

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Chapter 722 He Knows

□□In the basement of 19 Rue Scheer, Lumian encountered Mr. K.

If he hadn't witnessed Mr. K transform into flesh and blood to envelop Moran Avigny and subsequently suffer holy light damage from the Purifiers, Lumian wouldn't have believed that the energetic, black-hooded man before him had recently infiltrated the Intis Republic's Minister of Industry's residence and carried out an assassination.

"You're back from the Southern Continent?" Mr. K's voice was as deep and raspy as ever.

Instead of sitting in the red armchair, he stood directly in front of Lumian, in the shadows projected by the crystal chandelier.

Lumian didn't hide anything and smiled. "I'm back to do a favor for a friend. I'll be leaving again in the future. As you know, I can teleport."

Mr. K's expansive hood swayed gently, as if nodding.

He said with relief, "The fact that you still remember to come here and praise the Lord's glory after returning to Trier proves I didn't misjudge you."

Lumian, having just completed the prayer process with Mr. K, felt guilty and ashamed.

He cut to the chase.

"I saw you assassinate Moran Avigny."

Under his hood, Mr. K's gaze suddenly took on a tangible quality, and the shadows around him flickered.

After a few seconds, the Aurora Order Oracle asked in a hoarse voice, "You were there?"

Lumian maintained a relaxed demeanor as he replied, "Yes. Your assassination method bore the hallmarks of a Rose Bishop and was suspected of using Grazing to teleport. Even with just the Purifiers' information, it wouldn't be hard for me to guess it was you. But I admit, I was indeed present."

"Where were you hiding?" Mr. K inquired.

Lumian replied with a smile, "In the mirror Moran Avigny fled into."

At this, Mr. K's black robe fluttered despite the still air, as if countless flesh and blood were cheering beneath.

Unable to hide his excitement, he asked, "And now? Have you captured Moran Avigny?"

"Yes." Lumian nodded solemnly.

"Hahaha! Hahaha!" Mr. K half-raised his body, revealing his thin chin, and erupted into maniacal laughter.

His laughter made Lumian's ears ring. Light and shadows danced in the basement, the stench of blood permeating the air.

Finally, Mr. K stopped laughing and spoke with unnerving fanaticism,

"Just as the Lord arranged. Piousness is indeed the only way out!"

He began tracing a cross on his chest.

"Praise you for creating all. Praise you for bearing the world's sins!"

Lumian also praised the Aurora Order's True Creator.

Mr. K smiled and sighed.

"I had planned to assassinate Moran Avigny in the coming days, but hadn't set a date. However, when I saw him at the window this evening, gazing at the distant scenery, I sensed something off about his emotional state.

"Fearing something might go wrong, I hastily launched the operation and failed.

"I was about to repent to the Lord and shoulder my sins when you arrived and told me you had captured Moran Avigny.

"What does this signify?

"It means the Lord has prearranged everything. We need only pray, act, and do things with devotion. Nothing else matters.

"With piousness, failure is a stepping stone to success. Without it, even success leads to failure."

In previous conversations with Mr. K, Lumian had always felt a language barrier. He understood the words but couldn't truly grasp the fanatical state.

But this time, his heart raced and a chill ran down his spine.

Could the Under the Table transaction I initiated through the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction be connected to the Aurora Order's Lord?

Is that why Moran Avigny suddenly risked leaving through the study mirror? Why he came to the study to assess the environment, weighing the risks as he feigned reading…

So, after I compelled Moran Avigny's fate, Mr. K hurried to the study to assassinate him, forcing him to flee to the nearest mirror—the full-body one we hid in…

During the transaction, we paid with the Blood Gold ring, derived from the Beyonder characteristic of a Sequence 6 Rose Bishop of the Secrets Suppliant pathway…

Lumian chose to share his feelings with Mr. K but concealed his fear and the power of Compelling Fate. He attributed all the developments to the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

Despite his frenzied laughter, Mr. K remained composed. Solemnly and fanatically, he said, "The Lord watches, the Lord listens, and the Lord knows."

Lumian had heard Madam Magician say similar words before but hadn't felt their weight. He hadn't even been troubled, knowing it was futile. But now, every hair on his body stood on end, a chill running down his spine.

He sensed eyes watching him from every shadow.

The more he experienced and learned, the more acutely he felt the terror and oppression of those three short sentences.

After a few seconds, Lumian praised the True Creator again and asked, "Mr. K, why did you assassinate Moran Avigny? My friends and I dealt with him because the real Moran Avigny is dead. The active one is a Mirror Person. What about you?"

"Mirror Person? No wonder he has Mirror Substitution. That's precisely what I didn't anticipate—causing the assassination to fail," Mr. K sighed with realization.

Pacing back and forth, he told Lumian,

"Recent cases in Intis have led to an organization called the School of Truth. They used degenerates from cults and official organizations to achieve certain goals. For example, a descendant of Poli vanished mysteriously, and closely monitored pages from Roselle's diary disappeared."

Poli? One of Emperor Roselle's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? A descendant of his has vanished? Lumian's eyelids twitched at the thought.

Jebus Lata had mentioned the School of Truth's three goals: finding clues about the fallen heaven, Emperor Roselle's final mausoleum, and 0-05, the Magic Wishing Lamp.

The Fourth Epoch Trier's seal had just been breached. For now, Intis's official organizations were unlikely to overlook anything. As for 0-05, Emperor Roselle's eldest daughter Bernadette held it. The School of Truth admitted they couldn't handle the Element Dawn leader yet. They wanted more boons before trying.

In other words, two of the three targets required long-term planning from the School of Truth. That left clues about Emperor Roselle's final mausoleum. Jebus mentioned having no relevant clues himself. Whether the Overseer did was uncertain.

Combined with Mr. K's account, Lumian had a bad feeling.

Could the School of Truth already possess crucial clues about Emperor Roselle's final mausoleum?

Mr. K continued, "We're investigating these matters, as is Element Dawn.

"We recently discovered Moran Avigny's involvement in some cases. He seemed to be a key figure in the School of Truth."

"Then why assassinate him instead of capturing him?" Lumian felt Mr. K's previous actions aimed to kill Moran Avigny.

Mr. K chuckled raspily.

"Killing him is simpler than capture. And after his death, an abnormality will undoubtedly occur. The official Beyonders will find a way to communicate with his spirit. Then, the authorities will investigate the School of Truth to thwart their plan.

"Isn't that our goal?

"Plus, we can shadow the authorities to track down School of Truth members."

You, an Aurora Order Oracle, have also learned to "report" and exploit the authorities? Lumian found it amusing.

If not for needing more information about the Mirror People, he, Franca, and the others could have simply forced Moran Avigny to show signs of abnormality, avoiding so much trouble.

Lumian delved into more details with Mr. K, increasingly sensing the School of Truth was close to locating Emperor Roselle's final mausoleum.

Without delay, he expressed his urgency to return and interrogate Moran Avigny to prevent mishaps.

"Do you need my help?" Mr. K inquired.

Lumian responded with a smile, "Not for now. We have a Hypnotist, the Bliss Society's truth serum, and a Demoness skilled in spirit channeling."

He didn't mention also having Fate Appropriator abilities.

During Fate Appropriation, Lumian could "see" all of Moran Avigny's past and present fates, and most fate tributaries. But the duration was limited, only allowing extraction of the most pertinent information.

"Alright, let me know if you need anything." Mr. K sized up Lumian with admiration.

…

Finding a secluded spot to teleport back to the safe house, Lumian surveyed the area and said to Franca, "Use Mirror Cufflink's ability to take us back to the underground quarry cave."

This would prevent accidents from affecting the neighborhood.

Lumian had already teleported multiple times that day and even altered Moran Avigny's fate. Previously, he had played the Symphony of Hatred and triggered a series of weakness assaults. The immense expenditure left him with spirituality for only seven to eight more teleports and no further accumulation.

In this situation, using Beyonder items when possible was only natural.

Understanding Lumian's state, Franca didn't hold back on the Mirror Cufflink's charges. She only asked Lumian to carry the colossal dog and keep it from touching her.

She then made the glass cufflink on her blouse glow, leading Lumian and the others into the room's mirror. Through the dark, empty tunnel, they appeared in the quarry cave with a fixed entrance to the mirror world.

Franca took out the truth serum and tossed it to Anthony Reid with a friendly smile. "Feed some to Moran Avigny and have a good chat with him."

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Chapter 723 Secret of Immortality

Chapter 723 Secret of Immortality

After some time had passed, Anthony Reid guided the shriveled brownish-yellow dog back to the quarry cave that housed a fixed entrance to the mirror world.

Turning to Lumian, he said, "You can dispel the Animal Creation Spell now."

Lumian glanced at the enormous dog, which had lost its ferocious and ruthless demeanor. With a smile, he recited the dispelling incantation in Hermes: "Monk!"

Lumian had personally crafted the ritualistic dog skin. While he had used Padre Guillaume Bénet's activation incantation, he had modified the dispelling incantation.

Initially, Lumian wanted to use the name of Gehrman Sparrow, one of his two idols, as the dispelling incantation. However, since Gehrman was Mr. Fool's Angel of Redemption, uttering his name in Hermes might have unusual consequences and seem blasphemous. Consequently, Lumian discarded that idea.

Since the first ritualistic hide he made was dog skin, Lumian drew inspiration from the phrase "Monks Chasing Dogs" and chose the word "Monk" for the dispelling incantation.

As a dark light flared, it revealed a pitiful-looking Moran Avigny.

Instinctively, Moran reached for a handkerchief in his chest pocket and wiped away the dried blood, tears, saliva, and mucus from his face.

Rather than getting directly to the point, Lumian decided to begin with trivial questions to bolster his credibility and optimize the hypnotic effect.

With a blend of derision and a sigh, he said, "I can't grasp why you Mirror People loathe your real world equivalents."

Moran Avigny sneered in response. "If you were perpetually confined to the cold, gloomy, sealed mirror, you'd also despise your counterpart who basks in the sun, savors fine food and drink, and revels in leisure and pleasure."

"But your existence wasn't a natural occurrence. It was an accident," Jenna pointed out, narrowly avoiding mentioning that they were monstrosities inhabiting a unique mirror world.

Chuckling, Moran Avigny retorted, "What bearing does that have on our envy and hatred?

"We didn't trigger the accident. As we were born and have been perpetuating our kind, we possess the right to seek a superior life."

Momentarily at a loss for words, Franca and Jenna fell silent.

Speaking in a friendly tone, Lumian said, "You indeed have that right. However, it cannot involve murder or injuring the original body. Why not collaborate with official organizations, such as the Church of The Fool? After fleeing Fourth Epoch Trier, you could depart this city and commence a new life elsewhere."

Moran Avigny scoffed. "You believe we can trust and cooperate with these sun-dwelling organizations?"

"Are you not already collaborating with the School of Truth?" Lumian exposed Moran Avigny's deception.

After a brief pause, Moran Avigny stated, "We have a mission. We desire the authentic restoration of this world."

"Authentic?" Lumian intentionally provoked. "How can authenticity exist in a mirror? You Mirror People merely resemble the genuine ones. Upon death, you will revert to mirror shards."

Following the provocation, Lumian's eyes turned silver-black as he examined Moran Avigny's fate tributary, aiming to deter him from providing a response that could endanger his life.

After a quick observation confirming that his question wouldn't pose a significant risk, Lumian deactivated the Eye of Calamity to preserve his spirituality.

With a meaningful smile, Moran Avigny said, "No, in a certain sense, what resides in the mirror is real.

"Upon completing our mission, we will fully return to reality!"

Intrigued by Moran Avigny's confidence, Franca asked, "Why do you say that?"

Moran Avigny's gaze swept over the two Demonesses. Now in his refractory period, he chuckled and said, "Even I cannot comprehend the most basic reason. All I can disclose is that it relates to the Chaos Demoness we revere deep within the mirror world. She is the true Primordial Demoness!

"Moreover, I can offer an example: After transforming into a Witch and interacting with mirror magic, every Demoness's true self dwells within the mirror."

Observing Franca and Jenna's skepticism, Moran Avigny, eager to express his thoughts, inquired with a smile,

"Are you aware of the Demoness pathway's Sequence 3 name?"

In unison, Franca and Jenna shook their heads. "No."

With a slight nod, Moran Avigny explained, "It's known as the Demoness of Unaging. Eternal youth, skilled in resurrection and rebirth.

"Why are they so challenging to kill, capable of resurrection and rebirth? It's because what they destroy is merely their external form. Their authentic selves have always been imprisoned and sealed within the mirror!

"If the false ones perish, they can swiftly be resurrected through the projection of their true selves in the mirror!

"Consider this: how can one's true self, imprisoned, sealed, and utilized as a source of resurrection, not despise the false one in reality? Why wouldn't they yearn to escape the mirror and reclaim what is rightfully theirs?"

Franca abruptly recalled the moment she first entered the unique mirror world.

At that time, she had encountered her body's original self, the one with thick brown eyebrows and short flaxen-colored hair before ingesting the Witch potion. His face was drenched in blood, and his eyes brimmed with malice and hatred.

Could it be that after drinking the Witch potion and transforming into a woman, her male self didn't disappear but was exiled to the mirror, unable to escape? Franca was both alarmed and suspicious.

Jenna also remembered something from her past.

During the process of becoming a Witch, she saw her other self in an illusion—her malevolent, mirror-like self. Both of them plummeted into the black flames, and she struggled to crawl out, returning to the ice above the black flames to complete her advancement. The malevolent self was dragged into the bottomless Abyss by the python-like black shadow.

Could it symbolize self-division?

Is a part of me truly suffering in the mirror?

Noticing his two Demoness companions' perplexed state, Lumian smiled at Moran Avigny and said, "It doesn't necessarily involve self-imprisonment. It's conceivable that during the Witch transformation process, they formed a profound connection with their mirror selves, enabling them to master mirror magic. To a degree, this also allows for their resurrection."

"The mirror self is tainted with blood, malice, hatred, and malevolence because they are perpetually in this state. They constantly envy their real selves, just like you Mirror People from a unique world."

Unable to uncover the truth at the moment, Lumian preferred not to linger on the subject and attempted to shift the blame to others.

Furthermore, as a Mirror Person, Moran Avigny had an innate inclination to take sides. His words needed to be cautiously accepted and analyzed from a different perspective.

Upon hearing Lumian's explanation, Franca and Jenna's expressions softened. Moran Avigny mocked, "Self-deception cannot conceal the truth."

Recognizing that the initial preparations were nearly complete, Lumian decided to redirect the conversation back to the main topic.

Originally, their objective was related to Mirror People, but now Lumian sensed that the matter involving the School of Truth was more relevant and pressing. He needed to inquire about it first.

His eyes turned silver-black once more as he gazed at Moran Avigny and asked, "Did you enter into a contract with the School of Truth's Overseer?"

"Of course we did. How else could we collaborate? We all value contracts," Moran Avigny replied with pride.

Lumian chuckled.

"He didn't surreptitiously modify the terms the instant you signed the contract, did he?"

"No, I am highly attentive to such matters. As you know, I am a Judge in the mystical sense," Moran Avigny responded confidently.

Lumian probed further, "Have you met the Overseer?"

Moran Avigny shook his head.

"He signed the contract first and then dispatched his subordinate to deliver it. We never actually met."

"What has the Overseer been up to lately?" Lumian inquired cautiously.

Moran Avigny chuckled.

"I am merely a cog of his immense Under the Table black net. I assist in completing specific matters through transactions. I am unaware of what those matters allude to or the motivations behind them.

"Yes, he once mentioned that he intended to use individuals like me to weave an invisible and massive vortex. He could infuse his strongest desires into it and achieve results.

"A few days ago, he casually remarked that the vortex is on the verge of taking shape."

The vortex is about to take shape… Lumian continued to monitor the changes in Moran Avigny's fate tributary and, after some contemplation, asked, "How do you and the Overseer typically communicate? Is there a special contingency plan in case of an emergency?"

This was something he needed to ascertain as quickly as possible. The abrupt attack on Intis's Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny, and his enigmatic disappearance was breaking news. It wouldn't take long for the news to spread. When that happened, the Overseer would undoubtedly learn about it and promptly sever his original communication channel.

…

In Moran Avigny's villa.

Angoulême de François, the captain of the Purifier mobile team directly under Trier's diocese, had been prepared and swiftly arrived at the scene.

After listening to the on-scene Purifiers' report and assessing the scene, Angoulême frowned.

"A member of the Aurora Order?"

Not Hidden Blade and the others?

What are they up to!

Following a moment of reflection, Angoulême issued an order,

"Let's first suppress the news of Moran Avigny's incident to avoid alerting the individuals and factions behind this abnormality. We may still have an opportunity to uncover clues and proceed with our investigation."

This was his experience and a process the Purifiers were already familiar with.

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Chapter 724 Leader

Chapter 724 Leader

The Purifier team from Saint Viève Cathedral soon arrived at Moran Avigny's study, carrying a nearly sealed wooden box.

They each wore white robes adorned with waxed golden threads, thin rubber gloves, and leather hoods. Their masks curved downward, forming a bird's beak in front of their mouths and noses.

Angoulême signaled the other Purifiers to withdraw from this floor and clear the adjacent ones. Donning a bird-beak mask and similar attire himself, he tightly bandaged his wrists and ankles.

Peering through the red glass lenses of his mask, Angoulême watched his colleagues open the wooden box.

Mirrors of the perfect size lined the inner layer of the box on all sides—top, bottom, left, right, front, and back.

In the center, surrounded by the mirrors, stood a milky-white stone statue half the height of a person. It portrayed a beautiful half-naked woman, her dress torn away to the waist.

Despite the female figurine's broken arm, her other hand alluringly covered her navel. Her captivating figure and exquisite facial features stirred an inexplicable heat within Angoulême. A sudden urge to kiss "her" flooded his mind, a desire for an intimate encounter with the stone statue.

Not daring to breathe deeply, he forced himself to maintain control.

He recognized this as a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact under the Trier diocese, serial number 82, known as the Ullamos Statue.

This Grade 1 Sealed Artifact could gradually entice nearby creatures to obsess over it, spreading various illnesses, some common and others mystical in nature.

Left unchecked, the statue's influence would transform its surroundings into a nightmarish landscape of agony—living beings wailing, writhing, and perishing in horrifying ways. The relentless plague would expand, unleashing a widening catastrophe.

Angoulême had requested 1-82 for its ability to guide other creatures into the mirror world. Strictly controlling exposure time was crucial to prevent the spread of illness and obsession.

The two Purifiers gently lifted the Ullamos Statue and carried it to the full-body mirror in the study.

Angoulême and his two other teammates approached, placing their palms on 1-82's shoulders.

In perfect synchronicity, they magically phased through the glass mirror, vanishing from Moran Avigny's study.

As soon as Angoulême laid eyes on the dark, hazy, almost illusory space behind the mirror, a tickle in his throat urged him to cough.

"Sigh…" A soft exhalation escaped his lips.

Their attire couldn't isolate the disease spread by the Ullamos Statue…

Its sole purpose was to minimize the rate at which they succumbed to genuine infection!

Weakened yet inexplicably excited, Angoulême and his teammates investigated the area behind the mirror. They quickly discovered numerous dim mirror fragments scattered about.

"A battle took place here. Moran Avigny had to use Mirror Substitution multiple times, but there's no sign of blood, bodily fluids, hair, or any other traces," one of the Purifiers concluded.

Angoulême's heart raced as he speculated. A battle? Someone ambushed Moran Avigny in the mirror?

Impressive, Hidden Blade!

"It seems Moran Avigny couldn't escape right away and multiple Mirror Substitutions were shattered. There's a high chance he was captured," Angoulême analyzed seriously before pivoting to misdirection. "I see. The Aurora Order never expected the assassination to succeed. The assassin's only objective was to drive Moran Avigny into this mirror, where the rest of the Aurora Order awaited him!"

The other Purifiers concurred with this theory, nodding in agreement.

"Definitely the Aurora Order."

"They even utilized a potent item capable of accessing the mirror world to confront Moran Avigny."

"The absence of gruesome scenes suggests the Aurora Order aimed to capture Moran Avigny alive and extract vital information."

"Over the past five to six years, the Aurora Order has grown more intelligent…"

Following a short discussion, one of the Purifiers glanced back at the Ullamos Statue at the entrance and gulped.

"We need to leave now. Return 1-82 to the mirror box. I can't endure it any longer."

Angoulême agreed.

Back in the real world, they sealed 1-82 once more and removed their cumbersome attire. At last, he sighed with relief, feeling utterly exhausted in both body and mind.

…

Inside the quarry cave with a stable mirror world entrance,illuminated by the carbide lamp under the Eye of Calamity's gaze, Moran Avigny smiled as he answered Lumian's question,

"Also through a mirror."

While speaking, he retrieved a makeup mirror from his pocket and elaborated, "Every mirror in the mirror world is unique, each with its own corresponding coordinates. I provided him with my mirror's coordinates, and he reciprocated with the coordinates of a mirror on his side. With this arrangement, I can harness my abilities and the mirror world to transmit information to his mirror for a set duration. He contacts me in the same manner but relies on the Beyonder item I gave him."

"An IP address, I suppose…" Franca muttered in a language unfamiliar to anyone present.

Lumian smiled warmly and inquired, "Would you be willing to share the Overseer's mirror coordinates with us?"

Moran Avigny shook his head.

"It's indescribable and impossible to write down. Only those like us from the mirror world can perceive it. Or Demonesses with godhood—Demonesses of Despair."

Sequence 4 Demoness of Despair? And Sequence 5 is Demoness of Affliction… These two Sequences sound unpleasant. Uncomfortable to act, but the subsequent Demoness of Unaging is quite impressive… Franca gleaned information about the Demoness pathway from Moran Avigny's words.

"How can the Overseer perceive it then?" Jenna asked.

Moran Avigny smiled.

"He can't perceive it either, but his Beyonder item can record and use it."

Franca smiled and raised her sleeve, revealing the glass-like Mirror Cufflink.

Taken aback, Moran Avigny's expression shifted to one of relief.

"You're the ones who killed Jebus."

"The Overseer killed him," Lumian clarified sincerely. "We had no intention of killing him. We even wanted to befriend him, but the Overseer used a mysterious power from afar to end his life. I fear you may suffer the same fate."

Moran Avigny fell silent for a few moments before stating, "It can record it."

He referred to the Mirror Cufflink's ability to record the Overseer mirror's coordinates.

Franca wasn't surprised at all. "I knew it would work."

When she had used the Mirror Cufflink earlier, she realized the mirrors in the mirror world gave her a crystal-clear sense of the mirror world's entrances in the vicinity. There was the full-body mirror in Moran Avigny's study and a few other unknown mirrors.

Franca suspected the Mirror Cufflink would instinctively record the corresponding coordinates of each mirror.

Moran Avigny continued, "You won't be able to find the Overseer directly through that mirror. I've long suspected the mirror is actually with one of the Overseer's subordinates. Naturally, that subordinate must be very close to the Overseer. Otherwise, it would hinder the transmission of information."

Just like many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, the contact points reserved for Madame Hela's messenger are isolated from their real lives… Lumian nodded slightly and said, "That's not an issue. We can visit them one by one, as long as they're truly close. Can you provide us with those coordinates?"

Moran Avigny fell silent. The effects of hypnosis and truth serum battled fiercely against his resolve.

This was a Disciplinary Paladin's principle and corresponding restrictions.

Observing the shifts in his fate tributary, Lumian smiled and said, "You can think it over. Let's discuss something else first."

Having witnessed Moran Avigny's potential loss of control, he intended to inquire about other information. If the other party refused to divulge it later, he would kill him before channeling his spirit!

"Very well." Moran Avigny let out a lengthy sigh.

Lumian pondered briefly and asked,

"What deals did the Overseer make with you?"

Moran Avigny responded nonchalantly, "Primarily providing assistance to certain individuals. In turn, I received help through the Overseer. Consequently, we elevated our political status and acquired more resources.

"This is a common practice among politicians, but with the Overseer, it's even more covert, less detectable, and effective.

"Additionally, protecting specific individuals or indirectly granting benefits to non-high society members to fulfill the requirements on the other side of the Overseer's Under the Table transaction."

Lumian considered for a moment and asked, "Didn't that Overseer communicate with the leader of your Mirror People?"

Unsure if the Mirror People had a de facto leader, he said this to deceive Moran Avigny, implying they already possessed important information.

If the Mirror People truly lacked a de facto leader, Moran Avigny would see through the deception. With the truth serum and hypnosis, this wouldn't affect his subsequent answers.

Moran Avigny's expression shifted slightly. "He did communicate with our leader."

"How did they communicate?" Lumian asked calmly.

"Through a provided ritual. I don't know what was exchanged as I wasn't present," Moran Avigny replied honestly.

Franca asked curiously, "Is your leader in the real world or the mirror world of Fourth Epoch Trier?"

"In Fourth Epoch Trier," Moran Avigny said with a sigh. "Mirror People with powerful godhood can't escape through certain catastrophes via the leakage point."

Franca pondered for a moment and asked, "Does your leader have a corresponding self in reality?"

"Yes." Moran Avigny smiled. "You'll never guess who it is."

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Chapter 725 - 725 The Mirror World's Third Level

“We’ll never guess who it is?” Lumian and Franca scoffed simultaneously, pretending to be eager to speculate.

Of course, they didn’t make any direct guesses immediately. They planned to gather some information indirectly first before making a targeted guess.

Lumian noticed the change in Moran Avigny’s fate tributary and realized that as a Disciplinary Paladin, the man had his own principles and mystical limitations. He wouldn’t willingly reveal details about the Mirror People’s leader, yet he couldn’t completely suppress a desire to share–unable to resist the hypnotic influence. So, he taunted them in a boastful way.

“You mentioned Mirror People with powerful godhood can’t escape through catastrophes via leakage points, not just any Mirror People with godhood,” Lumian pointed out with a smile, interpreting Moran Avigny’s words. “So in other words, a Mirror Person corresponding to Sequence 4 has escaped, and your leader is a Mirror Person of at least Sequence 3 demigod level?”

Moran Avigny’s face instantly showed annoyance as he regretted being too detailed, realizing he had inadvertently revealed critical information.

Encouraged by Lumian’s astute observation, Franca smiled and asked, “Where are the escaped Sequence 4 Mirror People now? What are they doing?”

Moran Avigny’s lips trembled with clear effort, but he stayed quiet.

Just as expected from a Sequence 5 Disciplinary Paladin. They’re experts at resisting interrogation and prying… I wonder if destroying his frontal lobe would make him lose that last bit of self-control… Lumian wondered to himself and switched to a less sensitive subject.

“What are the requirements for Mirror People to appear?

“Does everyone who has lived in the real Trier for a long time automatically have a corresponding Mirror Person? Or do they need exposure to certain underground corruption first?”

This question was based on inferences from the Dream Festival incident.

Phew… Moran Avigny let out a relieved sigh, having almost lost control and spilled the most critical secrets moments earlier.

The current question let him relax a little. He answered smoothly, “If not for the seal specifically targeting Fourth Epoch Trier, the mirror world there would contain a complete reflection of the real Trier, including every resident. But under this seal, only those who frequently go into the underground areas and come into contact with specific corruption will leave an imprint in our mirror realm.

“Other than that, our kind has other origins too:

“The first type are descendants of a false deity. The corresponding Mirror People manifest from the moment of their birth, regardless of location or whether they’ve ever been to Trier.

“The second category comes from the bloodlines of certain noble families in Fourth Epoch Trier, like descendants of the Tamara family. That’s how I came to be. This isn’t limited by location or environment.”

Lumian and the others understood that the false deity he was talking about was Primordial Demoness Cheek. As an evil deity overseeing the mirror world, it made sense that Her descendants would have close ties to that unique realm.

“Why do descendants of the Tamara family have a special connection to your mirror world?” Lumian asked curiously. “Did your ancestors suffer the relevant corruption during the War of the Four Emperors, or even earlier?”

Moran Avigny paused for a few moments before replying, “Earlier. I’m not sure of the specifics of the corruption or how it occurred, as it was too long ago. Maybe those Tamaras who follow the Judgment pathway without being Mirror People themselves, or those of the Door pathway, have records of it.”

The Door pathway was another name for the Apprentice pathway.

Lumian nodded and asked on behalf of Franca and Jenna, “Does your kind exclude Mirror People of other Demonesses?”

“They are Mirror People, but not from our world,” Moran Avigny answered with a smile. “Of course, if the conditions I mentioned earlier are met, a Mirror Person corresponding to a Demoness could be born in our realm too.”

I see… Franca and Jenna nodded slightly as Lumian changed the topic.

“What are the Mirror People who left the underground doing?”

His question was broad, not specifically referring to the godhood-level Mirror People. Moran Avigny struggled for a moment before responding, “Most of them stay in Trier. They either use the original’s identity to advance their status in various industries and organizations, or they hide in the shadows, secretly developing their factions. The goal is to eventually fully unseal Fourth Epoch Trier and access the third, deepest level of the mirror world.

“As for the rest…”

Moran Avigny paused and grinned at Franca and Jenna.

“Some infiltrated the Demoness Sect to locate the fake deity’s real-world hiding place. Others went to Lenburg to search for an item, as instructed by the leader.

“Don’t ask me about the progress of those in the Demoness Sect or what exactly the ones in Lenburg are looking for. That’s not my area of responsibility. No one told me the details.”

“I also want to find the Primordial Demoness’s real-world hiding spot. Why not tell me about the infiltrators in the Demoness Sect? Maybe we could work together,” Franca suggested with a lovely smile.

Moran Avigny’s expression said it all: The more beautiful the woman, the more deceptive. I won’t fall for it.

“I don’t know their identities either. Only the leader has all the information.”

“Alright then.” Franca’s eyes darted around as she continued, “What did you mean by the third level of the mirror world? We’ve all gone into Fourth Epoch Trier and entered your special mirror realm. But what we encountered there were Mirror People of the deceased citizens from that ancient era. They were reflections of that bygone city. Where does your kind live?”

Moran Avigny explained, “Back then, you must have accessed the second level of our mirror world. It only appears under specific conditions and preserves the scene of Fourth Epoch Trier’s destruction. It’s quite dangerous and holds many unknown secrets. As for our daily life, we live on the first level of the mirror world–a reflection of the present-day Trier.”

“The first level mirrors the current Trier?” Jenna keenly noticed a discrepancy. “Didn’t you say you Mirror People live in a dark, cold, confined environment?”

Trier was now a metropolis!

Moran Avigny sneered and said, “We may seem to live in a metropolis, but in reality, we are all restricted. We can only walk fixed paths, endlessly wandering between a handful of rooms and one or two streets. Without the help of godhood-level powerhouses, we can’t even talk to each other. We can only observe what our counterparts are doing in the real world through mirrors. Plus, our realm has no reflection of the sun, moon, or stars. Imagine living in such an environment.”

It’s similar to the living conditions of the painting world’s individuals, except the Mirror People have self- awareness and a clear understanding… No wonder they are in agony… Lumian thought of a question when he realized the mirror world’s first level lacked the sun, moon, and stars.

“If a Sequence 4 Unshadowed of the Sun pathway comes into contact with the specific underground corruption, will a corresponding Mirror Person be born?”

“No,” Moran Avigny stated firmly.

Lumian used this chance to eliminate several more possibilities regarding the real identity of the Mirror People’s leader.

Franca sighed deeply. “The Sun pathway is truly exceptional. Befitting of the pathway that governs Purification.”

She then remembered her earlier unanswered question and pressed, “What exists on the third level of the mirror world?”

Once again, Moran Avigny shook his head.

“No one has entered it. We only know it exists. We know our origins, traits, and the source of our power all point to that Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

level. As for the Chaos Demoness we revere and follow, who is also the Primordial Demoness, She is trapped there for some reason, guarding the truth.”

Trapped there? More like sealed there… ‘Protecting reality’—a nice way to spin it… Lumian pondered briefly before asking, “What truth are you referring to?”

“Truth is truth.” Moran Avigny seemed confused, as if he had never seriously considered the matter.

Seeing that he lacked an answer, Jenna brought the conversation back to the Mirror People’s connection to reality.

Puzzled, she asked, “If the original person in reality dies, what happens to the Mirror Person?

“And the other way around?”

Moran Avigny’s lips twisted into a warped smile.

“Normally, if the me in reality dies, I’ll die along with him. But if I send my real self into the mirror world beforehand, the impact of his death on me will be minimal.

“The reverse holds true too. When I was still in the mirror world, if an invader killed me, the me in reality would merely get sick and be weakened for a time. Going forward, if he didn’t come into contact with the specific underground corruption again, no corresponding Mirror Person would exist.

“If I escape to the real world and am killed there, the real me won’t be affected at all.”

Franca hissed and said, “So instead of killing Moran Avigny directly, you found a way to drag him into the mirror world?”

“Exactly. I waited for him to ‘savor’ the darkness, coldness, isolation, and loneliness before ending him,” Moran Avigny confirmed with a smile.

In short, the one in the mirror loses significance and won’t impact the other’s survival, regardless of whether they are a Mirror Person or a real individual… If both are in the real world, the Mirror Person is naturally at a disadvantage… Lumian nodded slightly as he started to deduce the identity of the Mirror People’s leader mentioned by Moran Avigny.

Someone who ventures into Trier’s underground often, exposed to specific corruptions.

Formidable godhood, at least Sequence 3.

He must still be alive…

With this in mind, Lumian couldn’t narrow it down further.

He had no choice but to use his Conspirer abilities to upload all relevant information onto his mental network.

The Overseer of the School of Truth had performed a ritual and interacted with the Mirror People’s leader.

The School of Truth was searching for Emperor Roselle’s final mausoleum.

They had obtained something significant. The vortex was on the verge of taking shape…

Suddenly, a flash of insight hit Lumian, and an incredible guess raced through his mind.

He couldn’t be certain, as one premise seemed questionable.

He took two steps forward and whispered a name into Moran Avigny’s ear.

Moran Avigny’s expression changed drastically, a mixture of shock and panic.

Lumian withdrew and exhaled solemnly.

“Have you figured out who the Mirror People’s leader is?” Franca asked.

Lumian nodded gently and surveyed the surroundings. In a deep voice, he declared, “Yes, I know who He is. He’s Roselle Gustav in the mirror!”

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Chapter 726 Fragment of Fate

□□Roselle Gustav in the mirror?

When Franca, Jenna, and Anthony heard that the name of this dazzling figure, revered by every Intisian, was connected to the Mirror People, their minds went completely blank.

They instinctively wanted to question him further, but Moran Avigny's reaction and change in expression appeared to validate Lumian's conjecture.

"But the Emperor has been dead for over a century. How can there still be a corresponding Mirror Person?" Franca asked, finally composing herself.

It made sense that Emperor Roselle would have encountered Trier's underground corruption. He had, after all, lived in Trier for an extended period after reaching adulthood, and he was not one to easily settle down. He had seized control of Intis, reformed Trier, expanded the city, and initiated the patriotic health campaign, but hadn't he already met his end?

Lumian's serious expression softened a bit.

"Initially, I hesitated to make that guess, but then I recalled something. For someone of Emperor Roselle's stature, even if they perish, they might not be completely gone. There could even be a possibility of resurrection."

It was just like Naboredisley's Abomination corpse resting in the ancient tomb of the Dream Festival.

Franca made an odd remark. "Old institutions are hard to get rid of…"

With their experience dealing with the Devil Monarch's Abomination corpse, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony quickly accepted Lumian's explanation.

Lumian looked at Moran Avigny, whose face had turned ashen, and smiled.

"I made a bold hypothesis and meticulously verified it. When I shared my guess with him, he willingly confirmed it."

Moran Avigny's lips trembled, wanting to defend himself, but he held back.

He believed that the more he tried to explain, the more he would end up helping these people.

His urge to confide led him to add, "Now, do you understand that our Mirror People are also incredibly powerful?

"If we can fully break the seal of Fourth Epoch Trier, we will be as strong as any orthodox Church!"

Franca disregarded Moran Avigny's showy remark and muttered to herself, "No wonder the Church's demigods refuse to personally go underground and resolve the various abnormalities here unless the seal of Fourth Epoch Trier is badly damaged.

"This isn't about fixing abnormalities. It's about making more of them!"

Even though the demigods of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church didn't have to fear the birth of their corresponding Mirror People, Trier's underground corruption extended beyond just the mirror world!

Isn't the underground of Trier excessively vile and horrifying?

This was assuming that Fourth Epoch Trier was relatively well-sealed. What had the four Emperors, particularly Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, done during the War of the Four Emperors? The issues they left behind more than a thousand years ago were still incredibly terrifying!

We often venture into Trier's underground and have even entered Fourth Epoch Trier and the unique mirror world. Could there be a corresponding special Mirror Person?

No, it's not a matter of whether there is one, but rather that there definitely was one. They had encountered it before!

Lumian ignored Moran Avigny's boasting and turned to Jenna.

"Our investigation into the Mirror People has yielded significant progress. Combined with the Overseer, who evidently possesses godhood, what unfolds next is beyond our ability to intervene. As soon as we acquire the coordinates of the Overseer's mirror, promptly report the entire situation."

Jenna curtly acknowledged his words and laughed self-deprecatingly.

"Actually, I'm dying to report it now."

From her viewpoint, although she was unsure why the School of Truth was searching for Emperor Roselle's final mausoleum or what their intentions were, given the strong probability that they had already obtained vital information and collaborated with the mirror Roselle, the situation had obviously become very urgent, and it was certainly not a positive development.

"You can begin writing now." Lumian gave a slight nod and shifted his gaze to Moran Avigny.

He planned to appropriate the other party's fate.

Fate Appropriation was not his objective. By seizing the chance to interact with fate, his aim was to seek essential information from past fate fragments.

This was the penultimate segment of the "interrogation."

The final segment involved spirit channeling to forcibly obtain the coordinates of the Overseer's mirror!

Furthermore, Lumian wanted to take this opportunity to observe what would happen to the target if he seized one of their fate fragments without exchanging fates or directly causing their death.

This was not mentioned in the mystical knowledge possessed by a Fate Appropriator. The only thing Lumian knew for certain was that the past would not change, and what had already transpired would remain unchanged.

Initially, Lumian had wanted to inquire further about the Mirror People who maintained contact with Moran Avigny and their positions. However, the urgency of the situation led him to postpone this matter to the spirit channeling part. In any case, it wasn't particularly crucial.

From Lumian's perspective, it was more important to know the identities of the Mirror People who had infiltrated the Demoness Sect and who had gone to Lenburg in search of an item. However, Moran Avigny clearly had no knowledge of this.

Lumian suspected that the Mirror People who had gone to Lenburg were looking for clues about 0-01. After all, based on the information, this item likely had a close connection to Blood Emperor Alista Tudor. The method of sealing it was quite similar to sealing Fourth Epoch Trier. It might be of great significance to the Mirror People from the special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier.

Lumian extended his right palm and pressed it against Moran Avigny from a distance.

His blue eyes rapidly turned silver-black.

Moran Avigny was perplexed by Lumian's strange behavior.

Although he possessed the strength of a Sequence 5, he had been actively involved in politics for the past decade or so. He maintained a certain distance from the mysticism domain and the emerging cults. This was particularly true after becoming the Minister of Industry. He relied entirely on the connections within the Mirror People and the Brokers of the School of Truth to acquire the knowledge, information, and items he desired. Direct contact with wild Beyonders was uncommon, so he naturally couldn't discern Lumian's intentions. He only instinctively believed that Lumian had ulterior motives and wasn't simply acting.

Lumian's right palm "touched" the mercury illusory river corresponding to Moran Avigny.

The life of the Mirror Person flashed before his eyes, and various fate fragments surged along the river.

Lumian couldn't discern them in detail. Seizing the brief span of two to three seconds, he focused on observing two fate fragments.

One fate fragment depicted how Moran Avigny remotely instructed the School of Truth's Overseer to perform a ritual through the mirror, establishing a connection with the Mirror Roselle Gustav.

The other aspect was how this Mirror Person came into being.

In the previous fate segment, Lumian witnessed Moran Avigny stuffing a classic silver mirror into his makeup mirror and lending it to the Overseer.

At the source of the mercury river of fate, the 17- or 18-year-old Mirror Moran Avigny swiftly materialized in the dark and cold room, his expression naturally sinister.

The classic silver mirror bears a striking resemblance to the one Franca found at the overflow of corruption in the mirror world. She had relied on the latter to enter Fourth Epoch Trier during Operation Hostel… Could such a mirror be closely tied to the Mirror People?

Didn't Moran Avigny say that the descendants of the Tamara family naturally have a corresponding Mirror Person? Why wasn't he a baby when he was born as a Mirror Person? The descendants of the Tamara family must reach a certain age or have done something specific to produce the corresponding Mirror People? He doesn't seem to understand what's going on either…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian didn't allow the Fate Appropriation attempt to end naturally and result in failure. He seized the moment and grasped a fate fragment in his right hand. Through the spew of his spirituality, he slowly extracted the abnormally heavy target from the mercury-

colored illusory river.

The fate fragment corresponded to the scene of Moran Avigny's lust exploding under the Symphony of Hatred.

As time passed, Franca and Jenna asked about the other Mirror People to divert Moran Avigny's attention, and the fate fragment finally left the mercury river.

Consequently, the hole that had appeared was neither filled nor rewoven. Empty chaos occupied it, emitting a thin fog.

After storing the obtained fate fragments into his Spirit Body, Lumian carefully observed Moran Avigny's transformation.

As he waited, he muttered inwardly, The fact that we caught Moran Avigny remains unchanged…

Him drinking the truth serum and being hypnotized remain unchanged…

We haven't forgotten what he just said…

Yes, this Fate Appropriation took a total of three minutes. The fate fragment depicting his eruption of lust weighs heavily in Moran Avigny's entire life. After all, it caused his fate to take a sharp turn for the worse…

Appropriation requires a distance of 15 meters. Obtaining the target's blood is unnecessary…

While stirring fate and waiting for completion, I can't attack the target, but I can stay away…

It's more convenient to kill him directly. The Appropriation can be completed in a matter of seconds…

As Lumian reviewed, Moran Avigny's weakened aura gradually filled up, and his face flushed.

The bloodstains and tears on his face vanished.

Yes, there was no eruption of lust, so no severe injuries… Lumian harrumphed as Moran Avigny's face lit up with pleasant surprise.

Two beams of white light struck Moran Avigny, knocking him unconscious.

Simultaneously, Jenna and Franca, who had been closely monitoring Lumian's movements, aimed their revolvers at the yet-to-collapse Moran Avigny's head.

Amidst the gunshots, the Disciplinary Paladin's head exploded like blood-colored fireworks.

Lumian didn't complain about Franca and Jenna not giving him a chance to cull. He didn't want to waste his spirituality on Culling. When he appeared at the last moment and used the Symphony of Hatred to shatter Moran Avigny's remaining Mirror Substitution and capture him, he felt as if the potion had digested somewhat due to the successful cull.

Thud!

Moran Avigny's lifeless body crumpled to the ground, and Franca prepared to channel the spirit.

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Chapter 727 Arrival

□□As Franca prepared the ritual, she considered her options and said to Lumian, "The Overseer's mirror coordinates are indescribable and can only be procured through mystical means. The Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell isn't capable of that. I intend to use standard spirit channeling instead."

While the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell she had developed greatly extended the duration of the channeling and the number of questions the spirit would respond to, it was constrained by relying on the mirror as a medium, forfeiting the chance for other types of interaction.

"Regular spirit channeling drastically restricts the intel we can gather…" Lumian thought briefly and said, "For the first question, we should have him provide the coordinates of the Overseer's mirror. Second, ask about the whereabouts of the classic silver mirror utilized for the ritual and leader communication. Third, inquire about the identities and locations of the Mirror People in contact with him, ranked by importance."

Once the third question was answered, the spirit channeling ritual would come to its natural conclusion. Lumian suspected Moran Avigny might not have time to "introduce" every Mirror Person under his command. Hence, he asked for them to be prioritized based on the criticality of their role and responsibilities.

"A classic silver mirror?" Franca asked, puzzled.

"Yes, Moran Avigny has a mirror akin to the classic silver one you used to own. It's vital for communicating with Mirror Roselle," Lumian explained succinctly.

While speaking, he crouched and rummaged through Moran Avigny's pockets.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Industry carried only a handful of large bills and some loose change totaling 3,212 verl d'or.

Besides the money, there was an elegant golden mechanical pocket watch, a meticulously embroidered handkerchief, and a wallet crafted by a private designer and artisan.

But not a single item imbued with Beyonder powers!

Lumian couldn't resist mimicking Franca's inner thought: "Poor slob!"

He realized that as the sitting Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny was under the watchful eye of official Beyonders. He was unlikely to carry mystical items, Beyonder weapons, or anything that might reveal his abnormality.

As a Sequence 5 Disciplinary Paladin of the Judgment pathway, disclosing this to the two Churches would raise difficult questions about how he obtained the potion formula and Beyonder characteristics at that level. When signing the contract, he would at most acknowledge being a Beyonder of a related pathway without specifying the Sequence. This cost him the chance to procure items openly, forcing him to rely on Brokers—something official Beyonders couldn't be privy to.

Moran Avigny didn't require the Overseer's assistance with the Under the Table deal to access mystical items, as Mirror People could transfer objects through mirrors. If he genuinely needed an item for a specific purpose, he could reach out to his mirror world associates and have them "send" it over, returning it promptly after use.

Lumian sighed, pocketed the cash, watch, and other belongings, and rose to his feet.

With Franca's spirit channeling preparations complete, Lumian turned to Jenna, still composing her letter, and asked, "You shot without hesitation earlier. Did it weigh on you at all? This wasn't a battle. We'd been engaged in friendly conversation with Moran Avigny for a while now. I even started to feel like we were becoming friends."

Jenna glanced up at Lumian while writing on a protruding rock of the cave wall. She laughed softly.

"Worried I'll bottle up my emotional turmoil and cause issues down the line? Planning to play psychiatrist and offer me counseling?"

Anthony Reid, who had been observing silently, living up to his role as a Spectator, scratched his nose self-consciously.

That seemed to be his job.

However, he could discern that Jenna and Franca were not in need of counseling.

Lumian didn't tackle Jenna's question head-on. With a smile, he remarked, "You haven't taken many lives yourself."

"Had we not pulled the trigger, would you have taken action? Despite feeling you had befriended Moran Avigny, I think you wouldn't have flinched at blowing his head off," Jenna retorted, a smile playing on her lips.

Lumian let out a derisive snort. "I'm not like you. I've killed more people than I can count."

Jenna met his gaze again. "Moran Avigny admitted to his crimes. He lured the real Moran Avigny into the mirror, holding him captive before ruthlessly ending his life. I felt no qualms about carrying out the execution of a guilty man."

"You've changed…" Lumian let out an exaggerated sigh and quipped, "Once upon a time, you depended on the police and authorities to punish the bad guys."

Jenna didn't have a chance to respond, as Franca had finished her spirit channeling.

In the wavering dark-green candlelight, Moran Avigny's spirit took shape above his corpse, perceptible to those who had activated their Spirit Vision.

Franca acted swiftly. Withdrawing the glass-like Mirror Cufflink from her sleeve, she addressed Moran Avigny's spirit, "Give me the coordinates of the Overseer's mirror."

Moran Avigny's indistinct, menacing face twisted in anguish.

But stripped of life, he no longer had the ironclad self-control to resist the commanding pull of the spirit channeling. He stretched out his right hand, motioning for Franca to hand over the Mirror Cufflink.

Anticipating this, Franca passed him the Mirror Cufflink.

As Moran Avigny's spirit clutched the cufflink, a shadowy light shimmered across its form, drawn into the glass-like accessory.

Franca exhaled in relief upon the Mirror Cufflink's return.

Having achieved the primary objective, it was time to reap further rewards!

Her mood buoyed, Franca inquired of Moran Avigny with piqued interest, "Is there a functional classic silver mirror in your possession… Hold on…"

Abruptly realizing this constituted a question, she hastily rephrased."Where is the classic silver mirror the Overseer used to facilitate communication with your leader?"

Lumian had already ascertained Moran Avigny didn't have it on him.

Moran Avigny's spirit responded with cold rigidity, "Griffith has it. When I require it, I have him deliver it to me through the mirror."

Franca's initial elation quickly gave way to an exasperated curse.

"Dammit!"

It dawned on her that she couldn't extract Griffith's mirror coordinates from Moran Avigny.

The spirit channeling had but one question remaining. She needed to ask Moran Avigny about the Mirror People serving as their contacts and their true identities. Requesting mirror coordinates was out of the question!

Lumian and Anthony immediately grasped the reason for Franca's self-directed frustration, but they were powerless to intervene. Certain questions hinged on preceding answers, and mirror coordinates couldn't be conveyed through the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell.

Collecting herself, Franca fixed her gaze on Moran Avigny's spirit. Marshaling her thoughts, she articulated, "Name the Mirror People in contact with you. What roles do they play in the real world? Begin with those of the highest rank and responsibility."

Moran Avigny's ghostly, blurred visage contorted once more. Despite his resistance, he responded in a clipped tone, "First, there's Griffith, who serves as my second-in-command. Originally, he was a key figure in the Moses Ascetic Order. With our assistance, he's steadily elevating his position within the Order. His aspiration is for the secret organization to eventually join the alliance to open Fourth Epoch Trier's seal…"

The Moses Ascetic Order… The very group that clashed with Element Dawn, headed by the Emperor's firstborn, Bernadette? If memory serves, they primarily consist of Mystery Pryer pathway Beyonders… I can't help but wonder if the Research Society has members from either faction. There must be others like myself with multiple secret society affiliations… Franca listened intently, not daring to disrupt Moran Avigny's account.

Moran Avigny proceeded to the second Mirror Person.

"Caratanza Tamara, part of our branch's Tamara family. He enlisted in the military and now holds the rank of colonel. He legitimized his Beyonder powers by slaying a Loen Kingdom spy, seizing their potion formula and Judgment pathway characteristics…

"Palia, a ore scholar originally. She infiltrated the Trier Cave Association to mask our attempts at uncovering a vulnerability in the seal…

"Sport, Trier's Deputy Commissioner of Police and a member of the police commission. His original self was purposely corrupted during an operation. Subsequently, Griffith and Caratanza orchestrated an ambush, dragging him into the mirror and allowing the mirror world's Sport to emerge and assume his place…"

By this point, Moran Avigny's spirit had become increasingly insubstantial, on the brink of dissipation.

At that instant, Jenna concluded her letter and pivoted to face Lumian. "I'll now summon Madam Judgment's messenger."

The words had scarcely left her mouth when an ethereal voice, seemingly originating from a great distance, reverberated in the ears of Jenna, Lumian, and the others.

"Summoning won't be necessary."

A shared premonition compelled Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony to direct their attention to the side of the quarry cave.

In the chamber's dim illumination, supplied only by carbide lamps and candles, dazzling starlight coalesced in the void, rapidly tracing the outline of an enchanting door.

Noiselessly, the door swung open, revealing an enormous pumpkin carriage drawn by a multitude of gray rats.

Three women occupied the carriage's interior. One was Magician, resplendent in a beige gown with a high collar adorned with golden embroidery. Another was Judgment, her shoulder-length flaxen hair complementing her grayish-white knight's attire, accented by brown leather armor.

The third woman was clad in a purple dress bearing a cryptic pattern. A celestial globe and sundry items dangled from her waist, and refined spectacles perched upon her nose.

Clasped in her left hand was a peculiar lamp, its surface golden like a kettle and adorned with enigmatic designs.

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Chapter 728 Tracking

Lumian, Franca, and Jenna's eyes widened as they caught sight of the strange golden lamp, making a bold conjecture.

Could it be 0-05, the Magic Wishing Lamp?

Yes, the pumpkin carriage is one of Major Arcana Ma'am Hermit's trademark symbols. She has close ties to Element Dawn's leader—Emperor Roselle's eldest daughter—and the current owner of 0-05, Bernadette. It isn't outside the realm of possibility that she might have borrowed the Magic Wishing Lamp…

As these thoughts raced through their minds, they heard Anthony's respectful greeting, "Good evening, Madam Magician, Madam Judgment."

Snapping out of their momentary trance, Lumian and the others quickly followed suit with their own greetings.

"And this is Ma'am Hermit," Magician added briefly.

Once the introductions were complete, the woman in the beige dress with a gold-embroidered high collar retrieved a bottle of dark-red wine from the void and said to Franca, "Hand over that cufflink. Once you do, you can all head home and get some rest."

Confronting the School of Truth's Overseer was clearly a battle at the demigod level. It wasn't something Lumian and company could get involved in.

Franca had no intention of forcing the issue. She handed the glass-like cufflink to Madam Magician.

In exchange, Madam Magician gave her the wine bottle containing a faint dark-red liquid.

"This is a mystical item that restores stamina and spirituality after drinking it. But remember, you can only have it once a day. Don't go turning into a drunkard."

Just one more sip and you'll become a drunkard? Franca and the others instantly understood the deeper meaning behind Madam Magician's final warning.

Seeing only a single sip of dark-red wine in the bottle, Franca turned to pass the old glass bottle to Lumian.

He had expended the most spirituality, after all.

Madam Magician rubbed the Mirror Cufflink between her fingers, a smile playing on her lips.

"Don't worry. You won't be able to finish it. It's called Bottomless Wine."

I see… Franca still wanted to give it a shot. She unscrewed the thin metal cap and downed the light dark-red wine.

As the slightly astringent and sweet alcohol slid down her throat, she felt refreshed, as if she'd just had a good night's sleep and hadn't been in a fierce battle with Moran Avigny.

At the same time, she noticed dark-red liquid seeping from the bottom of the old glass bottle, forming a thin layer of wine.

It really is bottomless… Franca sighed, handing the old glass bottle to Lumian.

But just as she reached out, a sudden sense of unease struck her.

Acting on instinct, she changed course, intending to let Jenna drink first.

Yet upon further reflection, she realized something was even more off!

Because she still had to pass it to Lumian afterward!

Never mind, never mind. No point getting caught up in trivial matters… Franca muttered in her native tongue.

Instead, she circled her finger around the bottle and managed to form a thin layer of frost.

As the frost naturally fell away, Franca passed the Bottomless Wine to Jenna.

Jenna drank the dark-red wine, mimicked Franca's actions, and then handed it to Lumian.

Franca breathed a sigh of relief.

Lumian paid no mind to the Demonesses' odd behavior. He was more concerned about the strange actions of Ma'am Hermit and Madam Magician.

Ma'am Hermit's eyes, obscured by lenses, grew dark but remained unfocused, as if staring into a vast expanse. Countless brilliant specks of light appeared around her, as if she had shrunk the universe and brought it down to the ground.

Performing divination or prophecy before tackling important matters? Lumian took the old glass bottle and drank the dark-red wine.

His spirituality rapidly recovered, as if he'd experienced six in the morning.

Of course, the portion of accumulated spirituality he had used didn't "return."

Phew, Lumian's anxiety over his spirituality deficiency had been alleviated.

After Anthony drank the Bottomless Wine and returned the mystical item to Madam Magician, the Mirror Cufflink's dark glow, mixed with starlight, flew out and landed on the Major Arcana card holder's eye.

Madam Magician sent Mirror Cufflink flying toward Franca while extending her hands, grasping the void, and pulling it apart on either side.

Without a sound, the void ripped open like a transparent membrane, revealing passageways formed by spiderwebs of emptiness and darkness.

This was a standard mirror world.

Magician had opened an illusory door to the mirror world without using a mirror!

Is this the advanced power of the Apprentice pathway? Lumian and company inwardly marveled. Madam Magician glanced at Ma'am Hermit beside her.

The Hermit, wearing a purple robe, held a vibrant, unreal ball of yarn in her right hand. She wound its thread around the peculiar golden lamp.

Then, the Major Arcana card holder tossed the vivid and illusory ball of yarn through the illusory door Magician had opened, into the mirror world's dark and ethereal tunnels.

The ball of yarn rolled into one of the passageways and quickly vanished into the depths, leaving only the thread connected to the golden lamp to mark its path.

Magician immediately led The Hermit and Judgment into the mirror world, chasing the ball of yarn.

After their figures disappeared from the mirror world, the forcibly torn void rapidly closed.

Franca muttered again, "I think I've heard the story about a yarn ball before, but I can't recall its name…"

Lumian turned his attention back to Moran Avigny's corpse.

"You want to bring him back for your godson to eat?" Franca said with contempt. "Let's not even discuss whether Ludwig should be eating humans in the first place. A Mirror Person's flesh will gradually turn back into mirror fragments. Do you really want Ludwig to be eating glass shards?"

Lumian shook his head.

"I'm considering whether I should take Moran Avigny's makeup mirror."

…

After tracking the vibrant yarn for a while, the three Major Arcana card holders reached a country villa matching the mirror's coordinates and spotted the target mirror on a desk.

It was also a makeup mirror.

They didn't pause. They followed the ball of yarn and walked through the spirit world.

In a mere two to three seconds, they returned to reality and saw the vivid and illusory ball of yarn come to a halt in a dark cathedral lacking a deity's statue.

Beneath the cathedral's dome, humans hung in the air, gently swaying in the wind.

Some were old, some were young, and some were gentlemen wearing half top hats. Some were beautiful ladies in vintage dresses, some were tall and muscular like giants, and some were covered in wet, sticky scales resembling fish…

What they all had in common was their firmly closed eyes, suspended by invisible ropes, looking like hanged corpses.

In the cathedral's depths, a man in his thirties with average facial features and dark hair sat in a wooden black armchair. His aura and soul felt both familiar and unfamiliar to Magician.

It was familiar because she recognized Loki, the head of April Fool's, who had been compelled to exhaust his resurrection times. It was unfamiliar because the other party had been stained with an odd sensation.

At that instant, a blurry female figure stood next to Loki, resembling a sketch. Her eyes were pitch-black, like a lake in the dim night.

He looked at Magician, The Hermit, and Judgment, a smile playing on his lips.

"It's all thanks to you that I found some hope of returning."

Before Loki could finish his sentence, the suspended corpses' eyes snapped open simultaneously.

Those eyes were pitch-black.

…

In the quarry cave with a fixed entrance to the mirror world.

"Taking away Moran Avigny's makeup mirror?" Jenna echoed Lumian's words before a realization struck her. "Do you want to see if any other Mirror People will try to contact Moran Avigny before news of his mysterious disappearance

spreads?"

"Patience is a virtue," Lumian replied with a smile.

For a Hunter, this was an essential quality.

He stooped down and retrieved the makeup mirror from Moran Avigny's corpse's pocket.

At that moment, the makeup mirror snapped open.

It opened on its own!

Dark light surged from the palm-sized glass mirror, instantly filling the dimly lit quarry cave.

In the next instant, Lumian, Franca, and the others saw a figure quickly take shape beside the fixed entrance to the mirror world on the protruding rock.

It was a stunning woman with black hair and brown eyes. She wore a bright red dress with layers of embroidery and lace, revealing a large expanse of snow-white skin on her chest despite the cold winter. A friendly smile graced her face.

Perle?

The renowned courtesan in Trier, Perle, the theater actress from the Loen Kingdom?

Lumian was shocked and at a loss. He hadn't expected to encounter this flamboyant courtesan in such a setting.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony also found the situation surreal and hard to believe.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian recalled two key facts related to Perle.

The first time he had observed Moran Avigny, Perle had been on a date with her new lover in the hotel's annex restaurant.

All courtesans were standard, textbook brokers—political brokers!

Combining these two points, a guess formed in Lumian's mind.

Could Perle also be a member of the School of Truth?

Could she be the Overseer that Jebus directly reported to, the bestowed of an evil god at the demigod level?

If that's the case, where did Madam Magician and the others end up? Who were they tracking?

Flee! We must flee immediately!

At that moment, Perle looked at Lumian and the others, a smile forming on her lips as she uttered the Words of Order.

"Your crimes remain unpunished!"

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Chapter 729 Purpose

Franca had already concealed herself by the time she recognized Perle. Her plan was to circle around and use the mirror to reflect Perle's figure, hoping to curse her.

If the curse failed, it would at least create an opening for Jenna to sneak up from the shadows and assassinate the target.

Though not as cunning as Lumian the Conspirer, both Jenna and Franca instinctively sensed that the sudden assaulting Perle was incredibly dangerous, even more so than Moran Avigny. However, they didn't go so far as to suspect her of being an Overseer or demigod.

As Perle uttered the Words of Order, Franca felt slender, snake-like entities emerge from the surrounding shadows, enveloping her despite her invisibility.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Razor-sharp icicles burst from the ground like soldiers thrusting their spears.

Franca quickly leaped up, pressing one hand against an icicle to tumble out of the area.

She narrowly avoided impalement, hanging precariously from the icicle's tip.

Before Franca could regain her footing, black flames shot out from the shadows, hurtling directly towards her. The serpentine creatures around her constricted, binding her in layers.

Wh-- With no time to react, Franca could only watch helplessly as the black flames consumed her.

At the same moment, a figure stepped out from the shadows--Clarice, wearing an elegant black court dress with her hair in a sophisticated bun. However, the Demoness of Black's face was blurry and dark, unlike a living person.

My crime is cheating, deceit, and exploiting others, mainly in reference to the Demoness Sect. Is this punishment from a manifestation of the Demoness of Black? Franca's thoughts raced.

Her body shattered like glass.

Mirror Substitution!

Jenna, while stealthily hidden, also encountered a strange foe.

It was a clergyman from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, dressed in a white robe adorned with golden threads. Not only were his facial features hazy and unrecognizable, but his physique was also constantly shifting in subtle ways.

A blaze of sunlight descended, banishing the shadows in the area and exposing Jenna's body.

Realization dawned on Jenna.

My crime is believing in multiple deities and betraying the Eternal Blazing Sun...

So, an abstract embodiment of the Church's clergyman is punishing me...

Jenna quickly rolled to the other side of the quarry cave, dodging the clergyman's attack.

Anthony was not forgotten.

Just as he prepared to use Psychological Invisibility to approach Perle and send her into a Frenzy, a whip wreathed in silver lightning lashed out at him.

A crackling sound echoed in Anthony's mind, both illusory and real, sending a sharp pain through his soul. Every hair on his body stood on end.

If not for his incredible self-control, he would have screamed.

Before him stood a middle-aged man in a black uniform and white shirt, dressed as a Trier police officer.

My crime stems from my transgressions as an information broker, so I'm up against Trier's police? Most Trier police officers lack Beyonder powers, yet this Punisher directly wields abilities in the Arbiter domain? As Anthony conjured grayish-white dragon scales on his body, he deftly ran and rolled, seeking a chance to use Psychological Invisibility.

The already dim surroundings around Lumian suddenly darkened further, as if something was about to take shape, filling him with a profound sense of dread.

Just as the terrifying entity was about to emerge, it abruptly disintegrated. Even the surrounding gloom and fear dissipated like melting snow.

Uh... Is my crime too severe for a Punisher to manifest directly? Lumian guessed, considering Franca and the others' situations.

Behind him, spears of blazing white flame materialized and shot towards the flamboyantly dressed Perle like a volley of arrows.

The flaming spears formed a majestic and fierce forest, providing cover for Lumian's true attack.

He had already drawn his revolver, gently flicking the cylinder with his finger.

Three of the six bullets he had obtained from Jebus were loaded.

Lumian needed to use Implosion Bullets now.

Only by employing these special bullets in combination with his Cull ability did he have a sliver of hope of injuring Perle, whom he suspected to be the Overseer!

Bang!

Lumian's eyes blazed with an iron-black intensity as the starlight-shimmering bullets wove between the blazing white flame spears, speeding towards Perle's neck.

Perle stood beside the fixed entrance to the mirror world, her amiable smile unwavering.

The corners of her mouth curled up. "How dare you attack an Overseer?"

As the self-proclaimed Overseer uttered her first word, Lumian's starlight bullet abruptly changed course, hurtling towards his own neck.

Likewise, the blazing white flame spears strangely returned to Lumian's side, engulfing him.

Before Lumian could teleport, an Implosion Bullet struck him, causing his body to collapse bit by bit.

Crack!

He transformed into a mirror, shattering into countless fragments that vanished without a trace as they gathered uncontrollably.

After the battle with Jebus, Franca had provided Lumian with another Mirror Substitution!

Perle showed no surprise. She sighed and smiled. "Personally, I'd prefer you die now and release that Angel. It would greatly benefit our common cause. Unfortunately, the one who made the Under the Table transaction with me insisted on capturing you alive."

Lumian materialized in a corner of the quarry cave, catching Perle's words.

Instantly, numerous guesses flooded his mind.

Under the Table transaction?

Perle is the Overseer directly above Jebus. She evaded pursuit from the Major Arcana card holders by completing another high-level Under the Table transaction.

And for this, she must capture me and take me somewhere?

When did she find out about Moran Avigny's situation? Was she monitoring his residence? Or did she receive information from other sources?

Surely the Purifiers are professional enough to keep the news under wraps, right?

Why capture me alive? Who wants me alive?

To use me as a sacrifice, like Susanna Mattise?

Or could the person engaging in Perle's Under the Table transaction be a Sufferer from the Sinners organization? Someone who doesn't want Termiboros to break free from the seal, but instead wants to control this Angel and use Him as an ingredient for advancement?

No, that's not right. If he were just a Sufferer, even if he could mislead Madam Magician and the others temporarily, he couldn't prevent them from returning to help. Yet, Perle remains calm and collected…

Could the other party in the Under the Table transaction be a faction of the Mother Tree of Desire or the Great Mother? Only they could organize a lineup in this world to deal with the Major Arcana card holders…

With his keen Conspirer's intuition, Lumian connected two problems.

First, the counter-party of Overseer Perle's Under the Table transaction. Second, how she discovered Moran Avigny's mishap so quickly and promptly convened a high-level Under the Table transaction.

As these questions intertwined, a thought struck Lumian.

In the Purifier team, a key member of April Fool's wasn't a transmigrator. Together with Loki, he single-

handedly orchestrated the loss of the humanoid Sealed Artifact. To this day, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church hasn't discovered the perpetrator!

Could a Broker also be involved?

Indeed, only if a key April Fool's member lurking within the Church appears unrelated to the Purifier who lost the humanoid Sealed Artifact, and they don't even know each other, can the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, with its numerous Sealed Artifacts and demigods, investigate for so long without finding anything!

From the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's perspective, the Purifier who lost the humanoid Sealed Artifact truly committed a momentary "mistake." He had no motive for the crime and no links to April Fool's…

Has the School of Truth expanded the Broker business into the Eternal Blazing Sun Church?

It's true; only Unshadowed won't be embroiled in gray transactions, and most Purifiers can't reach Sequence 4. Similarly, not all Cardinals are from the Sun pathway…

It seems the School of Truth has long been connected to April Fool's and is collaborating…

Damn it, it really is a broker organization. It can be associated with any faction!

Could it be that the School of Truth's collaborator within the Eternal Blazing Sun Church urgently transmitted information about Moran Avigny's mishap to Overseer Perle?

Upon receiving the news, Perle immediately convened a high-level Under the Table transaction. Was the transaction with April Fool's? No, April Fool's doesn't have that power. Could it be the Celestial Worthy backing them or other high-

ranking subordinates of the Celestial Worthy?

No wonder they want to capture me alive…

Perle might have intended to offer an item in exchange for severing her connection with Moran Avigny. However, the counter-party in the Under the Table transaction proposed a new plan, allowing her to switch from passive to active, seizing the opportunity to deceive and set a trap. How far it can go depends on her improvisation…

If it is indeed April Fool's and the Celestial Worthy's will is faintly discernible, it would explain why Madam Magician didn't sense anything amiss and walked right into the trap.

Realizing this, Lumian was alarmed.

Termiboros warned me twice about the School of Truth. Could it be that He foresaw the corresponding fate unfold and a chance for Him to break free from the seal? Is that why He was so eager, hoping to compel it into fruition?

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Chapter 730 Struggle

Lumian's mind raced, unable to fully process the myriad details, but in the heat of battle, he couldn't afford to waste a single moment overthinking. Only a Conspirer could deduce a possible scenario within two seconds of Mirror Substitution taking effect. Based on Perle's words, Franca and the others would have concluded that she was the Overseer directly above Jebus. She had sidestepped danger through the Under the Table transaction but now had no choice but to confront them head-on. They couldn't let their focus waver, not even for a second.

Lumian cursed inwardly, frustrated that the Blood Emperor's residual aura had been sealed by Underworld Daoist's death mark. If not for that, his best bet would have been to activate the mark on his right palm with everything he had, allowing Alista Tudor to "descend" upon Trier once again. It would have drawn the attention of Angels from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, the God of Steam and Machinery Church, and other powerhouses hiding in the city, pressuring Perle to retreat.

Without a second thought, Lumian triggered the black mark on his right shoulder.

His plan was to teleport out of there and into Saint Vi?¨ve Cathedral.

Since Perle's goal was to capture him alive, he obtained a conclusion through simple deduction.

She would undoubtedly chase after him with all her might. There's no way she would stay put and risk failing the Under the Table transaction!

If that happened, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony would still have to deal with the conjured Punisher, but at least they wouldn't be facing a demigod. Their odds of survival would be significantly better. For any Mid-Sequence Beyonder, even a single Sequence 4 demigod--bestowed or not--was enough to make their hearts sink with despair.

Moreover, the two Demonesses and Anthony all possessed Mirror Substitution, as well as items like the Seven-Stone Bracelet. As long as they didn't become a demigod's target, they had a real shot at using the substitutes to escape to the Church of The Fool's cathedral at Lavigny Docks.

As Lumian's form swiftly dissipated, he reached into his pocket with his left hand, his mind crystal clear, and grasped Mr. K's finger.

He couldn't be sure if Perle was telling the truth about capturing him alive or if it was a lie. Was it just a demigod's nonchalance when dealing with a Mid-Sequence Beyonder, or a habit formed from a Broker's constant deception?

He had to be prepared for the possibility that Perle might not follow him and instead stay behind to take on Franca and the others.

His contingency plan was: Summon Mr. K!

While Mr. K, as a Shepherd, couldn't directly fight a demigod, he was the Aurora Order's Oracle. He could hear the True Creator's guidance at any time. His presence meant that the deity he believed in would surely cast His gaze upon them. There was a good chance it would trigger some miraculous turn of events in their favor.

And even without divine intervention, the Beyonder of the Apprentice pathway under Mr. K's Grazing appeared to have records of demigod abilities. It should be able to hold off Perle for a few seconds, giving Franca and the others a window to escape.

As Lumian activated his teleportation, Franca, who had been compelled to use Mirror Substitution, materialized in a corner of the quarry cave.

Clutching a makeup mirror, she decisively activated the Mirror Cufflink.

She already knew Perle was the Overseer and intended to escape via the mirror world.

Once concealed within the mirror world, she could jump to the mirrors on Jenna, Lumian, and Anthony. She could extend her hand and pull her companions into the mirror world, and they could all flee together!

The glass-like Mirror Cufflink emitted a dark light, but Franca didn't budge, unable to enter the makeup mirror in her grasp.

Wh-- Franca was stunned for a moment before a realization hit her.

Failing to enter the mirror world without any interference could only mean one thing:

This was a mirror world!

Except for certain unique mirror worlds, one couldn't enter the mirror world from within the mirror world itself. The only option was to use the mirror to jump!

Mirror worlds came in two varieties. The first was conventional and universal, not a true world. It was a concept of "doors" amalgamated into a dark void passageway linking all mirrors. Wherever mirrors and their surfaces existed, such mirror worlds with no discernible boundaries could be found. The second type was special mirror worlds. They relied on the conventional mirror world and leveraged specific corruption or corresponding abilities to take shape. Some were permanent, others temporary. Their characteristics closely mirrored the real world, projections of one facet of reality, but each had its own unique limitations and rules.

The mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier belonged to the latter category. It contained only a projection of Trier, a sprawling metropolis, and excluded other regions. Moreover, it was split into three distinct levels.

This mirror world was also special, but on a smaller scale. It was merely a projection of the quarry cave, likely generated by some ability.

As a veteran Shadow Merchant, Perle had a long-established partnership with the Mirror People. It was perfectly normal for her to trade items capable of creating temporary special mirror worlds!

Recalling the dark light emanating from Moran Avigny's mirror just before Perle's arrival, Franca's suspicion was confirmed.

Just as she was about to warn Lumian and the others, she saw the Demoness of Black's Punishment projection seize the moment to reflect herself in a mirror.

Franca's pupils dilated as she activated Mirror Substitution.

In an instant, she transformed into a mirror, engulfed by pitch-black flames from within.

Smack!

The mirror slammed into the ground, shattering into countless fragments.

At the same time, Lumian's figure rematerialized in place.

His teleportation had failed.

This was indeed a special mirror world. Finding an exit was the only way out.

Mr. K's finger had already expanded, morphing into a mass of flesh and blood that enveloped Lumian's body, forming a vibrant red cloak that covered him from head to toe.

With a sickening sound, Lumian's body was pierced by grotesque wounds, as if struck by invisible arrows.

It was only thanks to the protection of the flesh-and-blood cloak, transformed from Mr. K's finger, that he managed to survive. Otherwise, he would have been forced to animate his shadow to absorb those fatal injuries on his behalf.

Of course, he still had one more Mirror Substitution up his sleeve—courtesy of Jenna.

Overseer Perle stood firm beside the jutting rock deep within the quarry cave. She flashed Lumian a smile and said, "Those who defy supervision and try to flee shall face punishment."

As Franca and Lumian's attempts failed in quick succession, Jenna tossed out a handful of fluorescent dust, whispered an incantation, and promptly vanished from the Punisher dressed as a clergyman of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

A golden light surged around the Punisher, clad in a white robe adorned with golden threads, spreading outward in layers.

As the golden light reached an empty space, it abruptly encountered an obstacle, staining it a faint golden hue.

Jenna felt a surge of warmth and courage, but her eyes reflected a pure and magnificent blazing pillar of light.

Crack!

The pillar of light struck her, transforming her into a mirror and shattering her into pieces.

Anthony seized the chance to activate Psychological Invisibility once more. However, the Trier police incarnation didn't overlook him, as if it could detect the scent of sin on him.

Two bolts of lightning shot forth from the Punisher's eyes, piercing Anthony's soul.

Anthony's eyes bulged, his mouth agape, but he couldn't even muster a scream. He stood paralyzed, rooted to the spot.

"Death!" Trier's police incarnation uttered a single ancient Hermes word.

Clenching his right hand into a fist, he lunged at Anthony, leaving an afterimage in his wake.

Bang!

Imbued with a peculiar force, the fist collided with Anthony's head in an inescapable blow.

Crack! Anthony shattered into countless glimmering mirror fragments.

Franca, dressed in an assassin suit, reappeared.

Confronted by a demigod's overwhelming power, the ethereal, non-godhood-possessing Demoness of Black, and the sealed special mirror world, she decisively retrieved an item from her Traveler's Bag.

It was a silver-white full-body armor, taller than Franca herself.

Pride Armor!

Franca positioned the Pride Armor in front of her, its back facing Overseer Perle.

She was convinced that the demigod was the crux of the problem, not the Punisher taking the form of the Demoness of Black. If Perle remained unscathed, another Punisher would emerge to eliminate even after dispatching the first. She might even face a direct "accusation."

Franca noticed Perle standing beside a protruding rock with a fixed entrance to the mirror world.

It led her to believe that Perle could harness the Fourth Epoch Trier's abundant corruption to request a fixed entrance to the mirror world created by the Primordial Demoness. Not only would it allow them to enter and exit the conventional mirror world without relying on their inherent characteristics and abilities, but it would also serve as the gateway to this special mirror world.

After all, it could be considered a gift from a true god!

The instant the Pride Armor's feet touched the ground, it suddenly spun around, fixing an invisible gaze upon Overseer Perle.

Franca swiftly leaped to the side and rolled, avoiding facing the Pride Armor's back.

Thud thud thud!

The silver-white full-body armor charged towards Overseer Perle, condensing a broadsword of light in its hand.

…

In the dark cathedral bereft of a deity's Sacred Emblem, a pea rapidly grew, transforming into a multitude of thick turquoise vines that converted the area into a lush paradise of plants and an otherworldly forest.

They separated the suspended corpses, preventing them from approaching The Hermit.

Judgment, who had remained silent, extended her right palm, her eyes glowing with a copper-gold luster.

She spoke gravely in ancient Hermes, "Marionettes are prohibited here!"

The animated corpses abruptly ceased their movements, and Magician tore open the void before her, tainting it with resplendent starlight, forming an enchanting door.

Beyond the door was the portrait of a woman—Loki, who had undergone a bizarre transformation.

Loki reached into the air and pulled out a figure.

The figure was a woman with a voluptuous build, dressed in a black gown. A golden crown encrusted with jewels adorned her head. She had curly chestnut hair, blue eyes, a high nose bridge, and slightly thin lips. She exuded a Demoness-like allure from the inside out.

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Chapter 731 Another Good Job

□□In the depths of the shadowy cathedral, Loki conjured a figure out of thin air. The scene unfolding beside him was vividly reflected in the eyes of the Major Arcana card holders: Magician, Judgment, and Hermit.

On the wall of aqueous-black stone bricks, a painting depicted a woman in a bright red dress adorned with intricate embroidery and lace. Her black hair was styled in an elegant high bun, and her face bore a mysterious, frozen smile. Her brown eyes seemed transfixed on the vivid, illusory ball of yarn before the Hermit and the peculiar golden lamp connected to its other end.

The woman remained within the mural, silently observing the scene.

At the same time, the mature lady with a golden crown, exuding the allure of a Demoness, was pulled from the air by Loki. She turned her piercing blue eyes towards the Hermit, who had just entered the cathedral's depths through the starlight door.

As her long, chestnut hair billowed, each strand thickening, she too seemed fixated on the Hermit.

Prophesying a grim future, the Hermit quickly shielded herself with the Magic Wishing Lamp.

Then, arching her back slightly, she sprouted pure white, illusory feathers reminiscent of a swan's.

Fairytale magic, Ugly Duckling!

Even an ugly duckling could transform into a swan!

This power allowed Saints who had not yet reached the Angel level to reveal their incomplete Mythical Creature forms.

The pristine swan feathers abruptly turned a grayish-white and hardened into falling rocks. The Hermit's exposed skin split open, revealing grotesque, sinister crevices.

Within the crevices, flesh and blood writhed, giving rise to black and white eyeballs.

The eyeballs petrified and fell away, only to be replaced by new ones. Yet, the Magic Wishing Lamp before the Hermit remained untouched.

The black-clad empress's body suddenly became ethereal, her form dissipating into a torrent of knowledge that surged towards Magician, dressed in white with golden embroidery.

Magician appeared beside Loki in an instant, but a deluge of information immediately emerged from the void behind her.

Vanishing, the Magician reappeared "simultaneously" in nine different locations throughout the cathedral, her form flickering incessantly.

Upon realizing that their target was the woman in the wall painting, she attempted to escape the shadowy cathedral by force, but each effort led her back to where she began.

The black-clad empress's incarnation continued to pour forth information from behind the Magician's nine figures, seeking to infiltrate the target's mind and denying her the time to tear through the void.

Smiling, Loki rose from the black wooden armchair and reached into the void with his right hand, as if grasping someone's arm once more.

Seizing the moment, Judgment reached the cathedral's dome and pressed down with her right palm, like chaos descending from the heavens to the earth.

In ancient Hermes, she solemnly declared, "Mystery weakens here, while reality grows stronger!"

…

As the silver Pride Armor raced towards Overseer Perle, Franca activated the Seven-Stone Bracelet on her left wrist.

The crimson, blood-like gem on the bracelet, adorned with three diamonds and four uniquely colored gems, burned with a fierce light.

In a flash, Franca appeared behind the Demoness of Black.

She refrained from joining the Pride Armor in confronting Overseer Perle, having learned from Lumian's encounter that their attacks would have no effect on the Overseer and only invite proportional punishment.

Instead, she resolved to eliminate the Demoness of Black, a Punisher lacking godhood and exhibiting rigidity. The Demoness was merely equivalent to a stronger Sequence 5 Beyonder, making it possible for Franca to deal with her.

As for Overseer Perle, the outcome depended on the changes and effects brought about by the Pride Armor, a Sealed Artifact devoid of "sin" and pragmatic intelligence.

Materializing, Franca raised her left hand, already adorned with the Ring of Punishment.

In her lake-blue eyes, two bolts of lightning suddenly ignited and shot forth.

Crack!

The Demoness of Black's figure shattered into countless fragments.

Dammit! Mirror Substitution is such a nuisance! Franca couldn't help but curse inwardly.

At that instant, Lumian had just endured the punishment for attempting to escape, the flesh cloak transformed from Mr. K's finger shattering and splattering on the ground.

He watched as the silver-white Pride Armor rushed to Overseer Perle's side, raising a broadsword forged from pure light.

Perle maintained her friendly smile, undaunted by the imposing presence of the massive, heavy armor.

An Overseer was impervious to attacks from those lacking godhood!

This was the sacred significance of overseeing.

As for daring to strike an Overseer lifeform, the consequences would be dire!

Perle could already envision the armor-like Sealed Artifact turning on the Demoness who had summoned it in the next moment.

As the Overseer contemplated this, the silver-white Pride Armor swung the Sword of Dawn in its grasp.

It remained unaffected!

Perle's pupils dilated as her figure in the bright red dress transformed into a pitch-black shadow.

The broadsword of light descended, cleaving the shadow in two.

The divided shadows took form, replicating multiple similar shadows that scattered in all directions.

The Pride Armor genuflected and drove the Sword of Dawn into the ground.

The broadsword shattered, unleashing countless sharp fragments of light that swept across the area.

The entire quarry cave was bathed in illumination. To Franca's surprise, the Demoness of Black, whose outline had been visible nearby, rapidly faded and vanished.

Likewise, Jenna and Anthony, who had been cornered by the clergyman of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the Trier police incarnations, found themselves no longer under attack or pursuit.

Bewildered, they observed as the Punishers, who had exerted immense pressure upon them, melted away like frost under the sun's rays.

Lumian was astonished by the Pride Armor's performance.

He had harbored little faith in the Sealed Artifact's ability to challenge Overseer Perle. Yet, to his pleasant surprise, it had exceeded his expectations!

Furthermore, he had noticed several peculiar details since Perle's arrival.

The Overseer's feet had not shifted an inch!

She stood beside a protruding rock with a fixed entrance to the mirror world, never pursuing or approaching. Instead, she exerted her influence upon them from a distance.

Could this be an inherent trait of an Overseer? Might the Pride Armor's capacity to strike her stem from the abhorrence and hatred imbued within it by a deity before His demise? Were only attacks infused with godhood or a corresponding level of corruption capable of harming an Overseer? Lumian frowned, pondering these possibilities.

Snapping out of her daze, Franca shouted to him, "Moran Avigny's makeup mirror!"

She knew that the Pride Armor could not so easily vanquish Overseer Perle. They had to seize this fleeting, uninterrupted window to escape the extraordinary mirror world.

Before Overseer Perle's appearance, the dark light emanating from Moran Avigny's makeup mirror had led Franca to suspect it might be the exit!

Franca trusted that Lumian grasped the full import of her concise words and refrained from elaborating further. The blue gem on her Seven-Stone Bracelet emitted a sea-like glow.

In an instant, she materialized beside Jenna, grasping her arm.

A diamond on the Seven-Stone Bracelet illuminated.

Teleport!

Franca and Jenna teleported to Moran Avigny's corpse and the nearby makeup mirror.

Meanwhile, Lumian readily understood Franca's message.

He activated the black mark on his right shoulder and teleported to Anthony's side. Without hesitation, he grabbed his teammate's arm and teleported once more.

Their destination: Moran Avigny's already open makeup mirror!

However, upon appearing near Moran Avigny's corpse, Franca and Lumian were stunned to discover that the makeup mirror had become illusory and unreal, as if it were a mere projection of the original item.

At that moment, they heard Overseer Perle's voice once again.

"You stand guilty! You have harmed an Overseer!"

As her voice echoed, the silver-white full-body armor ascended, and the void behind it ruptured into darkness.

Propelled by an unseen force, the Pride Armor plummeted into a centipede-like crack resembling a void scar, falling into a pitch-black abyss that extended as far as the eye could see. It vanished entirely from Lumian and his companions' sight.

Judgment: Exile!

Fragmented shadows swiftly converged beside the protruding rock with the fixed entrance to the mirror world. Overseer Perle, garbed in her red dress, reappeared.

Holding a makeup mirror in her hand, she smiled and said, "Did you believe I would leave the exit intact? I replaced it with a counterfeit long ago!"

Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony's expressions shifted slightly.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian, already grasping Anthony's arm, swiftly activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He and Anthony vanished in an instant beside Moran Avigny's corpse.

Franca made a similar effort, causing the emerald in her Seven-Stone Bracelet to emit a transparent green light.

However, just as she Blinked with Jenna to a corner of the quarry cave, Perle's Words of Order resounded in her ears.

"You stand guilty! You attacked an Overseer!"

Franca was the one who had unleashed the Pride Armor!

As Franca prepared to use the Seven-Stone Bracelet to depart her current location, she suddenly witnessed the surrounding void freeze and transform into layers of amber, encasing her and Jenna within.

This was a "cage" from which even teleportation could not provide escape.

It encompassed the entire area, and even if Franca and Jenna attempted to employ Mirror Substitution, they would remain confined within its boundaries.

Judgment: Confinement!

Overseer Perle averted her gaze, searching for Lumian and Anthony.

She surveyed the surroundings but found no trace of the two.

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Chapter 732 Protection and Trust

□□Perle swiftly focused and took her Overseer position, carefully observing the different sections of the quarry cave.

The area was shrouded in darkness, with only a carbide lamp lying on its side providing a faint bluish-yellow light.

As she looked around, Perle spotted Lumian and Anthony.

They were both located at the quarry cave's exit, which marked the isolated boundary of this unique mirror world. It wasn't a viable escape route, leaving them trapped.

Lumian stood facing Perle, wearing the Flog boxing gloves with iron-black spikes. He gripped a brass revolver in his hand.

Anthony took cover behind him, their backs almost touching.

The Hypnotist, however, wasn't standing. He was down on one knee, using a blank sketchbook propped on his right thigh as a surface to quickly draw something with a short pencil.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian and Anthony found themselves inside a Bottle of Fiction, formed from the quarry cave's exit.

But this was pointless against Perle, who had a complete overview of the current mirror world. She could easily see where Lumian and Anthony were hiding.

As she watched the scene unfold, Overseer Perle felt a strange, unsettling aura, as if it involved a gray domain.

Lumian, as the team's leader and most powerful member, appeared to be buying the Spectator more time.

Whether he was gambling on her unwillingness to kill him, hoping to capture him alive, so he could be used as a shield, it was evident that the Spectator's actions were critical. Lumian believed it could either harm her—an Overseer—or help them evade an Overseer!

Without hesitation, Perle fixed her gaze on Lumian and Anthony within the Bottle of Fiction and declared in the Words of Order, "An Overseer sees all secrets!"

The moment she uttered those words, the Bottle of Fiction at the quarry cave's exit quietly disintegrated.

However, Perle noticed that while Lumian was no longer shielded by the Bottle of Fiction, Anthony still remained inside one. The Overseer's words had failed to dispel it!

Confirming this detail, Lumian smiled.

The Bottle of Fiction surrounding Anthony was created using him as a base.

His spread legs and the ground created a symbolic doorway.

Lumian's body arched slightly as he faced Overseer Perle. His smile twisted as he muttered under his breath, "Yes, Anthony is carrying out a crucial task under my guidance.

"But to break the Bottle of Fiction made from a living person like me, you must defeat me first. Anyone trying to harm Anthony will have to go through me!

"I am now Anthony's shield. I am the wall that protects him!"

Perle's smile diminished slightly as she regarded Lumian with a grave expression.

"You stand guilty!

"You murdered someone!"

Murder… Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

He wasn't surprised by the fact that he had killed someone, but he didn't expect Overseer Perle to charge him with such a crime.

No matter the form of the ensuing punishment, the ultimate outcome was set in stone.

A murderer met his end!

Doesn't she want to take me alive? Lumian had voluntarily become Anthony's shield, believing that Perle wouldn't risk killing him. This would limit many of her abilities. He hoped to buy time until Anthony finished the sketch on the Beyonder painting album he had gotten from Bard. The album's purpose was to bring drawings to life or manifest special effects for a period.

Unexpectedly, this plan fell apart from the start.

Of course, Lumian didn't bet everything on the possibility of the Overseer only wishing to capture him alive. It was impossible for him yo defeat a demigod, but he had some hope at buying time.

A muffled thunderclap resounded in the low ceiling of the quarry cave. Silver-white lightning serpents sprang forth, intertwining into a tree of lightning as wide as a barrel, aimed at Lumian.

Before the thunder echoed and the lightning struck, Lumian had already lifted his hand, pointing the brass revolver at the world's punishment.

His blue eyes turned iron-black, but he couldn't perceive any weakness in the terrifying lightning.

His only option was to channel blazing white flames into the revolver and the bullet about to be fired.

Bang!

As the threatening silver-white tree of lightning hurtled down, a bullet glowing with dark green flames shot from the muzzle, colliding with the immense lightning bolt.

Weakening Bullet!

This was the Weakening Bullet he had obtained from Jebus!

Instantly, the barrel-thick lightning bolt shattered the dark-green bullet and the blazing white flames encasing it. A blinding silver-white light engulfed Lumian.

Boom!

A horrifying roar assaulted Anthony's ears, causing his body to shudder involuntarily, nearly deafening him.

He remembered the night the cultists attacked the army camp. Gunfire, cannon blasts, screams, and shouts came from every direction, overwhelming him with panic and fear. It had left a profound psychological scar that took years to heal.

Now, he felt as if he had been transported back to that moment.

Anthony gathered himself and looked at the blank sketchbook before resuming his sketch. The pencil in his hand rustled as it moved.

He could still vividly recall Lumian's body language: "Unless I die and someone steps over my corpse, no one can harm you!"

Compared to the helplessness and terror of that night at the military camp, where everyone was in peril, Anthony felt the current situation wasn't as dire.

At the very least, I have a dependable companion!

At the very least, someone is willing to risk their life to protect me!

Amidst the innumerable silver lightning serpents, Lumian's body first fractured into mirror shards, then charred and crumbled into dust—the Mirror Substitution Jenna had provided him!

Lumian's figure reappeared, standing firm in his spot with his legs slightly parted.

Rumble. The thunder in the sky didn't fade with the previous punishment. A new round of execution was brewing.

Since the Overseer had prosecuted, the punishment would persist until the target was well and truly dead!

Lumian's scalp prickled, and his black hair stood on end from the lingering electricity in the air.

Seconds later, an even more magnificent and terrifying colossal lightning bolt silently descended.

Already clenching his teeth, Lumian tossed aside his revolver and raised his hands, allowing the Flog boxing gloves with iron-

black thorns to precisely meet the lightning's tip. Blazing white fireballs materialized above him.

The Flog boxing gloves could withstand an attack imbued with godhood at the cost of shattering or cracking!

Boom!

Amidst the abrupt, devastating explosion, the silver-white tree of death, composed of lightning, stopped at Lumian's fist and the Flog boxing gloves.

Rumble. Blazing white flames burst forth, driving the tiny lightning serpents back.

The lightning punishment quickly subsided, but the muffled rumble in the air lingered.

With multiple resounding cracks, Lumian's Flog boxing gloves turned charred and cracked, shattering into countless pieces that rained down.

Seeing a fresh round of lightning about to form, Lumian knew he shouldn't, but he couldn't resist urging Anthony inwardly, Why isn't it done yet? I can only hold on a little longer!

After a brief, suffocating silence, a silver-white giant lightning serpent abruptly struck from midair, illuminating the entire quarry cave and the smile on Overseer Perle's face.

Lumian only had time for one thing.

He animated his shadow and switched places with it.

Boom!

Amid the sharp and urgent thunderstorm, the giant lightning serpent consumed the shadow, instantly vaporizing it without a trace.

At last, this round of punishment concluded, and Lumian reappeared in front of Anthony. His legs were slightly apart, and his back was somewhat hunched, but no shadow remained under his feet.

Why isn't it finished yet? Lumian thought anxiously.

He considered dismantling the Bottle of Fiction and teleporting Anthony around.

However, he could tell that the Overseer's prosecuted punishment wouldn't end simply because he changed positions. With the speed of lightning, he couldn't depend on teleportation to evade it.

It wasn't a matter of teleportation being too slow, but rather the time he needed to activate the black mark on his right shoulder.

Rumbling thunder resonated in Lumian's ears, heralding the impending punishment.

Behind Lumian, sweat the size of soybeans formed on Anthony's forehead as he crouched on one knee, drawing on his right thigh, which served as a table.

The sketch's first half was successful and completed quickly, but for some reason, the final stroke suddenly became challenging.

The painting album influenced the pencil, causing it to greedily absorb Anthony's spirituality. However, even this substantial amount of spirituality could only inch the black lines forward slowly.

At the same time, the edges of the blank drawing page gradually curled, igniting with transparent flames, as if struggling to contain what Anthony was about to draw.

Anthony was well aware that this painting album was not meant to display such a thing, but he had complete faith in Lumian's judgment and persevered.

Rumble!

The muffled thunder intensified, and Anthony, within the Bottle of Fiction, could hear it clearly.

Despite being a Psychiatrist, he found himself unable to control his emotions. Nervousness, impatience, anxiety, and panic surged within him.

He composed himself and continued the final stroke.

Seeing the terrifying silver lightning on the brink of taking shape and Anthony still silent behind him, Lumian felt a wave of despair.

Am I about to die?

Very well, I'd like to see what Termiboros looks like!

Death… Suddenly, a flash of inspiration illuminated Lumian's mind.

He retrieved an item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was a golden mask adorned with several dashes of oil paint.

He had obtained this golden mask from Hisoka, and it originated from Death!

Lumian swiftly put on the golden mask, his body rapidly growing cold as his aura gradually dissipated.

The terrifying lightning punishment brewing in midair abruptly came to a standstill.

Lumian gazed up at the silver-white electric serpents that no longer converged, his lips curling beneath the golden mask.

He had become an undead creature!

One of the golden mask's purposes was to transform the wearer into an undead being while preserving their intelligence!

Since Lumian was now "dead," the punishment had fulfilled its purpose. It naturally came to an end!

Witnessing this, the Overseer was momentarily taken aback before grasping the situation.

She chuckled, but her composure remained intact.

While the punishments descended, she had not sat idle and had prepared for any unforeseen circumstances.

She used a coin bag to execute an Under the Table transaction.

Her right hand was about to withdraw.

Behind Lumian, Anthony watched as the curled-up edge and invisible flames rapidly spread to the center of the painting page, intensifying his despair.

Even if he managed to complete the final stroke, the drawing paper would be rendered useless—nothing effective would come out of it.

Anthony gritted his teeth, choosing to trust his companion and Lumian.

He recalled Lumian's instructions: "Draw Monette first before drawing Madam Magician!"

Monette, the Islander swindler Monette… The instant this thought crossed Anthony's mind, he was astonished to see the painting paper's edge halt and the invisible flames temporarily freeze.

His pencil movements became smoother.

Mustering his spirituality, he finished drawing a monocle outlined by simple lines on the right eye of the thin-faced Islander with sunken eyes, thick lips, and slightly curly black hair.

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Chapter 733 Praise You

□□Finishing the last stroke, Anthony sighed in relief, confirming he still lived.

Though unsure if Amon's incarnation--Monette's drawn form--could help turn the tables and find a way out of the mirror world, he had obeyed his partner's orders and done his part.

Almost at once, Anthony saw the corners of Monette's sketched mouth turn up, eyes appearing to come to life.

But the curling paper and translucent flames stirred once more.

In an instant, the drawing of Monette condensed into a ball, devoured by clear flames and absorbed into the dim Bottle of Fiction.

Wh-- Had it failed? Anthony's heart squeezed tight again.

Even a disciplined Hypnotist found it hard to stay calm in the face of this.

Right then, Overseer Perle, still next to the jutting rock, pulled her right hand from the Under the Table bag of coins.

The transaction was made; Lumian's group would teeter on the edge of sleep!

Perle looked back at her target. Lumian stood firm, wearing a gold mask painted black and white. His aura was gone, body radiating an icy breath of death.

But Lumian's now blue eyes stayed open.

As an Overseer, Perle knew something was wrong.

About to act, a thick darkness swallowed her, snuffing out the carbide lamp.

Perle's eyes shut as she swayed unsteadily.

She fell asleep.

Somehow, the sleep effect meant for Lumian's team had hit her instead, leaving them untouched.

Seeing this, Lumian felt shock, then immense joy.

He sensed a strange power pulsing from the Bottle of Fiction he had made with his body.

Did it work?

Had Anthony done it?

As expected, the entity's prior actions sought to help His father.

And His father is on our side against heretics!

Lumian quickly deactivated the Bottle of Fiction, ready to teleport to the sleeping Perle. He would get Moran Avigny's mirror and try to escape through the mirror world's set entrance.

If he could just get out, he could find help to make Perle leave.

Just then, Perle's coin bag and Moran Avigny's mirror fell to the ground.

Smack!

Moran Avigny's mirror broke, cracking the entire mirror world barrier. Perle, driven by flaming ambition, woke up with a start.

As Lumian's hopes sank, a shadow raced out of the shattered mirror.

It combined with strewn bits of flesh and blood, instantly reforming into Mr. K in his black robe.

When the mirror world took damage, the Aurora Order Oracle felt his finger and teleported on instinct, turning to shadow to slip through the cracks.

...

In the dark cathedral in an unknown location, Magician Blinked over and over, unable to shake off the flood of random information.

As she Blinked, starlight filled her eyes, solidifying into a weird, ancient stone wall clock.

Clang!

Grand, majestic chimes echoed in every nook of the cathedral.

An old, mottled phantom appeared in the air--a stone wall clock split into twelve sections, each crossing grayish-white or bluish-black symbols.

Clang!

The chimes carried an unspeakable, invisible torrent through long ages past, freezing all present.

The horrifying torrent of information froze. Hermit, changed into an incomplete Mythical Creature, stopped cold. Judgment, floating over the cathedral, turned to a statue.

Loki's hand, reaching into the void, also paused, failing to pull out a silhouette.

In this frozen state, the starlight in Magician's eyes changed again.

Countless complex mercury symbols appeared, quickly joining into a huge, unreal, scaleless serpent.

The silver-white giant snake, layered with dense patterns and symbols, made connected cylinders with different markings.

The next second, the mercury serpent bent to bite its tail before it began slowly turning.

The massive torrent of information started to reverse, going back the way it came until it turned back into the woman in the black dress with the gold crown.

The black-dressed woman faded, becoming a ghost and a floating, oddly captivating tarot card. In the end, both went back to the void and disappeared.

Fallen rocks flew back to Hermit's body, turning back to eyes or pure white. Hermit quickly lost her terrifying look that would make anyone go mad.

Judgment returned to the surface, going back past the "door" as the mystery-weakening limit faded.

Loki drew back his hand, settling into the pitch-black wooden chair.

…

In the fractured special mirror world, Overseer Perle saw the hooded, black-robed Mr. K and his many sins upon waking up.

Oddly, the criminal who had done worse things than Lumian only had a small gray spot.

This suggested that finishing an Under the Table transaction with Mr. K would be hard, as if it needed certain conditions.

It seems to come from extreme devotion. All Under the Table transactions can only keep going with the permission of the one he has faith in… As Perle's mind raced, she glared at Mr. K and said with the Words of Order, "You stand guilty! You murdered someone!"

The space over Mr. K went dark at once as something awful took shape.

Having heard Lumian talk about Jebus's powers, he knew a deadly punishment was coming. He quickly changed his Grazing target, using Devil Transformation and Rose Bishop's flesh and blood magic to endure the unknown attack.

But in a flash, the growing penalties vanished, as if going to an unknown place.

The scary pressure, like thick smoke, blew away in fierce winds.

Mr. K was stunned for a moment before exploding in crazed laughter.

"Haha! Hahaha!

"I'm guilty, but the Lord carries my sins!"

"I'm innocent. I'm innocent to this world!"

Amid the laughter, Mr. K changed Grazing targets. Layers of unreal doors showed up in his eyes.

Many doors to different places came together, turning into ghostly books.

The book materialized in front of Mr. K, pages flipping fast.

"I came, I saw, I recorded."

As the ethereal voice rang out, the illusory book stopped on a page.

In an instant, Mr. K turned into a two- to three-meter-tall half-giant in cold black armor, holding a pitch-black sword.

He sprinted towards the Overseer.

"Praise you!" Mr. K roared, slicing down with the Sword of Darkness.

Perle's face went grim, seeing the prosecution had no effect on Mr. K.

Of course, as a demigod, though caught off guard, she knew what to do.

Amid Mr. K's wild laughter, she stressed with the Words of Order, "An Overseer is protected!"

The black-armored half-giant used all his might, slashing at Perle's head with the dark broadsword, but an unseen barrier blocked it.

The barrier cracked. Mr. K's body quietly fell apart. A clean cut took off his right arm and shoulder, dropping them to the ground.

Though Mr. K used recorded demigod powers and had a bit of godhood, he still faced punishment for attacking a "clearly" protected Overseer.

This was a freshly done crime, not yet borne!

The flesh on Mr. K's shoulder writhed, as if a new arm would grow. But he ignored it. His left hand grabbed the falling dark sword, yelling again, "Praise you for creating everything!"

As the rough voice echoed, the dark broadsword slashed at Overseer Perle.

With Perle's former protection, the dropped coin bag floated back to her hand.

She quickly made an Under the Table deal aimed at everyone there.

Crack!

As the dark broadsword swung, the unseen barrier guarding the Overseer fully shattered.

Mr. K's left arm came off his body, showing a huge cut.

In the cut, blood-colored flesh tendrils grew fast, as if alive, as if a new Mr. K would emerge.

Overseer Perle wasn't happy. Based on the Under the Table deal, Mr. K, Lumian, and the rest should have gotten much weaker.

But in truth, nothing changed!

Could it be that I'm unlucky? The person who made the deal was a fraud who never meant to keep their end? Perle's heart sank as she couldn't move for some reason.

Then she saw the armless Mr. K bow in an exaggerated way.

The Aurora Order Oracle's mouth opened as wide as it could, corners going to his ears. Blood churned where it tore, flesh tendrils thickly covering the spot.

Using his stretched mouth, the black-armored Mr. K bit the dark sword's handle.

He jumped high, voice ringing from his chest.

"Praise you for bearing the world's sins!"

Amid hoarse yells, Mr. K fell, a straight dark sword using himself as the grip, slashing at Overseer Perle.

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Chapter 734 My Weapon

Lumian stood at the quarry cave's exit, wanting to work with Mr. K to take on Perle, but unsure of how to proceed.

Past experience had shown him that without godhood, any action against an Overseer would only come back to haunt him, without affecting the demigod at all.

With his golden mask removed, Lumian could only remain in place, considering what items he possessed that might be useful and effective. He was left with no option but to watch the fight between Mr. K and Perle unfold as a mere spectator.

At the same time, he scanned the area, looking for a way to utterly destroy the existing mirror world.

Anthony kept his posture and continued drawing on the blank painting album, which was missing a page.

His current subject was to be Madam Magician.

As he observed Mr. K's movements and listened to each slash, Lumian sensed a slight corruption creeping into his mind.

It surprised him that Mr. K could hold the Overseer at bay to some degree, unafraid of her accusations and armed with a means to harm her.

Lumian silently hoped that even if Mr. K couldn't defeat Perle, he would at least be able to drive her off.

Mustering strength from his waist and core, Mr. K swung his upper body as he descended, bringing the dark broadsword down on Overseer Perle's head for the third time.

Perle remained motionless, not using any Mirror Traversal-like ability to evade, nor rolling to the side. She stood firm beside the jutting rock, her body turning pitch-black and dissolving into a constantly dissipating shadow.

The dark, enigmatic broadsword plunged down abruptly, silently cleaving the shadows in two.

The shadows rapidly encircled the protruding rock, perpetually moving and merging once again. They writhed, striving to reassemble Overseer Perle's form.

Where the Sword of Darkness had cut through, the shadows struggled to form proper connections, barely managing to stack together into a humanoid shape riddled with cracks and misaligned parts.

Mr. K sprang up, ready to swing the dark broadsword gripped in the gaping crack of his mouth.

Suddenly, his body shrank rapidly, the cold black armor encasing him vanishing.

He reverted to his original form, dressed in a black hood and matching robe.

The precariously assembled shadow gradually shed its black color, revealing human skin and a vivid red dress inch by inch.

…

In the shadowy cathedral at an undisclosed location, the mercury giant serpent phantom hanging in midair slowly faded away.

The Reboot was finished.

Perched on a black wooden armchair, Loki abruptly thinned and shrank, transforming into a paper figurine.

The paper figurine and chair then crumbled, disintegrating into dust.

Loki materialized in a far corner of the cathedral. Magician, appearing to still be airborne, quickly conjured an alternate self behind him.

As Loki reached into the void to pull out an assistant, his jet-black eyes suddenly shifted to blue.

The blue rapidly stained black, then reverted to blue, the two colors continually alternating.

Loki was paralyzed, unable to summon an aide, allowing Magician to stretch out her right hand and grasp with all her might.

The dark void warped, swallowing Loki. Then, the two shattered into fragments, ultimately buried in a bottomless abyss.

Throughout this, Loki's body instantly became ethereal, unreal, as if he were a projection or puppet that had been swapped at some moment.

Hermit, Judgment, and Magician simultaneously heard a regretful sigh and witnessed the shadowy cathedral itself turn ethereal and slowly disintegrate.

It, too, seemed to be a projection.

An aged, ethereal voice then echoed from the distance.

"My wish is for all the demigods present to be lost for three minutes."

The shadowy cathedral fully collapsed, and darkness engulfed the surroundings, devoid of starlight or boundaries.

…

In the special mirror world, realizing Mr. K could no longer maintain his godhood-enhanced half-giant state and Overseer Perle was close to returning to her human form, Lumian's first instinct was to shape-shift into a shadow being and flee through the growing rift in the mirror world to find other allies.

However, he was unsure if Mr. K had employed any mystical items upon entry, and whether Shadow Transformation alone would allow passage through the mirror world's fissure.

As Lumian watched Overseer Perle's face gradually come into view, her eyes and nostrils both vertically misaligned, a sudden realization struck him.

I, too, can wound an Overseer…

If Mr. K can do it, so can I!

My fate is intertwined with Termiboros. To a degree, we can be considered one. I've long known I possess a fake angelic level!

The powers and items I wield won't hold godhood and can't touch an Overseer, but I should be able to do it myself.

I will become my own weapon!

These thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as a slightly manic grin spread across his face. His blood seemed to boil, as if set aflame.

In a flash, he disappeared and reappeared before Overseer Perle.

His eyes had already taken on an iron-black tint, revealing a few pale spots that marked Perle's vulnerabilities.

One such spot was just below the left side of her face!

Before Perle's shadows could fully reconstruct the Overseer, a multitude of incandescent white flames burst forth from Lumian's body.

Like a rushing current, they poured out from Lumian's eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, skin, and pores, completely enveloping him, transforming him into a raging inferno.

Let's do this!

Let us burn as one!

Let us explode together!

Lumian, now one with the blazing white flames, swung his right fist at Perle's left cheek.

Perle's vertically-misaligned eyes betrayed a flicker of confusion before understanding dawned.

But it was too late for her to protest or react. She had not even fully returned.

Bang!

Lumian's right fist collided with Perle's left cheek, caving it in.

As he struck, a ghastly wound appeared on his own chest and abdomen, but it was quickly consumed by the blazing white flames.

Perle felt the pain, but it was not a mortal blow.

At that instant, Lumian's face, wreathed in blazing white flames, displayed a sinister and frenzied smile.

It actually works!

I can truly use myself as a weapon to strike an Overseer!

Boom!

He detonated his right arm, using the incandescent white flames he had pre-injected to make it explode.

His right fist, propelled by a fierce, blazing white wave of flames, pierced Perle's left cheek and penetrated her skull.

Cull!

Crack! The special mirror world, with its dark barrier and numerous cracks, let out a shattering sound. It rapidly disintegrated and fell apart.

Lumian's head took an invisible blow, his skull caving in and teeth falling out.

Deprived of his right arm, he was hurled through the air, his entire body wreathed in blazing white flames.

His face twisted in agony, yet his eyes shone with elation.

Success!

He beheld a horrific, blood-red wound on the left side of Overseer Perle's face. Within the wound, a pale-white fog intermingled with the grayish-white brain. The shattered fist had ripped it asunder and set it ablaze.

As the blazing white flames faded, Overseer Perle's remaining right eye dulled, and her body slowly crumpled.

The cage imprisoning Franca and Jenna quickly disintegrated.

Mr. K, observing this, nodded approvingly.

Lumian is like me!

The fighting style is quite alike!

The only shortcoming is that he did not loudly praise the Lord during the final blow.

At the same time, Lumian's head buzzed, and he nearly blacked out. He collapsed to the ground, on the verge of losing consciousness.

He managed to stay awake only because he had undergone significant digestion of the Reaper potion. It felt as if he had completed another massive cull by the ancient tomb during the Dream Festival.

Wh— Lumian was initially thrilled, but then he forced himself to stand, shocked and suspicious.

He knew the digestion must have resulted from his Culling of Overseer Perle, but shouldn't a demigod suffice for him to fully digest the Reaper potion?

Lumian extinguished the incandescent white flames burning within and without. With his left hand, he retrieved the healing agent and Lie earring obtained from Jebus from his Traveler's Bag, all while examining Overseer Perle's corpse.

Just then, the special mirror world completely collapsed, and they found themselves back in reality, inside the quarry cave with a fixed mirror world entrance.

Next to the protruding rock where Perle had stood, there was no corpse or white fog to be seen.

Lumian spotted an oil painting hanging on the corresponding rock wall.

The painting looked torn and ruined, but one could faintly discern that it had once portrayed a woman in a red dress.

Perle?

We weren't facing the true Overseer, but a painted figure she created using a Pixie pathway item?

This oil painting grants the depicted demigod a short lifespan, but no freedom of movement?

Is that why Perle never budged and always took the attacks head-on?

Amid his bewilderment, Lumian drank the healing agent Jebus had procured from the Great Mother's followers to ensure he would survive past 6 a.m.

At that moment, Perle's smiling voice resonated from the depths of the shattered oil painting.

"I didn't anticipate my painting person failing.

"But no matter. What's important is that the vortex is about to manifest. It won't be long before you're officially consumed.

"Everyone will be caught up in it…"

Perle's voice gradually faded into the depths of the oil painting, thwarting Mr. K's attempt to track her through teleportation.

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Chapter 735 I Have Sinned

The healing agent's effects and the incineration of the original flames had largely stemmed the bleeding from Lumian's wounds. Flesh and blood had even started to regrow and form scabs over his skin.

Putting on the Lie earring, Lumian tried to shift the gruesome hole in his chest and abdomen to a less vital location. As he did so, he stared intently at the oil painting hanging on the rocky wall, his thoughts racing.

As an Overseer, Perle is unlikely to directly engage in combat herself?

Has her true form been lurking in the shadows this whole time to avoid any potential mishaps?

But if she had personally intervened, perhaps we would have been defeated long ago, with no chance for any slip-ups…

Furthermore, Perle doesn't appear overly concerned about capturing me alive. Doesn't the failure of her painting version indicate that the Under the Table deal she initiated didn't meet the requirements? She's bound to face severe consequences for that in the future.

It's not as if she's a fraud…

Coming to this realization, Lumian suddenly came up with a guess:

Perle was the sole person to mention capturing me alive. There's no other evidence to support it…

While this may indeed be a request from the other party in the Under the Table transaction, it's probably not the only one. It's likely one of multiple requests and the least critical. That's why, after creating the special mirror world, Perle immediately left this painting behind, allowing her painting version to handle us while she went off elsewhere.

Was she going to carry out the most vital and important requirement?

I can't fully trust a Broker's words either…

Based on her tone, she seems to have succeeded. This strongly suggests she's confident the vortex is on the brink of taking shape. It won't be long before it entraps everyone…

Apparently, she wasn't in the vicinity at all. She merely used the link to her painting self to briefly speak remotely before vanishing completely. We have no way to track her.

Lumian felt his theory could account for Perle's actions and certain details from the prior battle. This realization made his heart sink.

If his suspicions were correct, the School of Truth's vortex hadn't been successfully halted and was about to manifest!

What would transpire after some time had passed?

Right then, Mr. K approached Lumian, his gaze locked on the tattered oil painting.

In a hoarse voice, he spoke, "I have sinned. I failed to discover the School of Truth's scheme beforehand, letting the issue escalate until it was on the verge of erupting."

As he talked, the flesh on Mr. K's shoulders writhed, and two pale, slender, damp arms gradually grew out. The black robe, its sleeves severed, was beyond repair.

Not waiting for Lumian to respond, Mr. K turned his head and said, "The disturbance here will soon be noticed. We shouldn't stay. Meet me tomorrow morning."

"Got it." Lumian glanced at his companions, who had concealed themselves in the shadows or used Psychological Invisibility, and nodded subtly.

He also intended to head to the safe house as quickly as possible to avoid any accidental attacks by official Beyonders.

Once Mr. K teleported away, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony came out of hiding.

"We should get back to the safe house now," Lumian said decisively.

Franca nodded and said with regret and sorrow, "I wonder where Pride Armor was sent. It would be such a shame if we truly lost it."

If Pride Armor hadn't hit Overseer Perle's painted self, compelling her to alter her life form and indirectly making the transformed Punishers disappear, even if Lumian could have still found a way to lure out the Islander swindler, Monette, they wouldn't have survived the following stages. In that case, he would face not only Perle's punishment but also Anthony's Punisher.

For Lumian and the others, Pride Armor had performed exceptionally; it was a Sealed Artifact of tremendous value. Nobody wanted it to be lost.

"If it were human and smart, it could find its way back. But now…" Lumian sighed, grasping Anthony's shoulder with his left hand.

Suddenly, dazzling starlight emerged from the void, rapidly forming a dreamlike door.

The door opened, and out came Magician, Judgment, and Hermit.

Surveying the scene, Magician noticed Lumian's dire condition, one arm missing. With an odd expression, she asked, "You were attacked?"

As she spoke, the quarry cave, lit solely by the carbide lamp's glow, darkened, as if an unseen curtain had been pulled around it.

"Yes," Franca replied on behalf of Lumian, who had only gained enough reprieve from his injuries to avoid imminent death. She concisely recounted the whole situation.

"The one who attacked you came from Perle's painted self. Her true form departed to do something else?" Magician sought confirmation.

"That appears to be the case," Lumian responded.

Magician exchanged glances with Judgment and Hermit, their eyes meeting without hiding their bewilderment.

After a short pause, Magician offered no explanation. Starlight gathered in her eyes, as if tracing a pattern.

A gentle rain fell, soaking Lumian's body and fully healing his wounds.

Nourished by the rain, Franca and the others felt their weariness melt away.

It closely resembles the power Madame Night used in the dream… Lumian drew a connection.

Magician nodded and instructed, "Provide me the details in writing tomorrow."

With that, she disappeared along with Judgment and Hermit.

As the darkness around them lifted, Lumian realized they had returned to the safe house in the administrative district, where Jenna had summoned Judgment's messenger.

"Madam Magician and the others are perplexed that we were attacked by Perle's painting self," Anthony remarked while putting away the blank painting collection, voicing his thoughts.

Lumian nodded and replied, "What's perplexing shouldn't be Perle attacking us. It's not unusual for an Overseer with an Under the Table transaction at the heart of it all to do something like that."

"So what were they perplexed about?" Jenna and Franca couldn't figure out an answer.

Anthony tried to analyze the situation.

"They're not perplexed by Perle's attack itself, but why we were targeted by her painted self specifically.

"They seem to think we wouldn't be attacked by Perle directly. Whether she had such intentions or acted on them is irrelevant."

Lumian and the others became lost in thought.

Abruptly, Franca exclaimed.

Looking at Lumian and the others, she slowly withdrew her hand from her Traveler's Bag in astonishment.

"Pride Armor is in here. It's returned!"

"Did Madam Magician help locate it?" As this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he noticed Franca's actions.

He instantly shouted, "Stop!"

He couldn't allow Franca to retrieve the Pride Armor!

This is a confined room, and I'm present!

Franca's expression froze, and she immediately stopped moving her elbow.

…

In the mirror world created by dark void tunnels, Overseer Perle continuously moved from mirror to mirror, searching for her final destination.

Her expression stayed calm, thrilled that the calamity had instead accelerated the vortex's formation.

On the other side of the dark, vacant tunnel, a vibrant ball of yarn quietly trailed her, leaving a concealed path.

…

The next morning, having sent the letter to Magician, Lumian reached Psychic's headquarters and met Mr. K in the basement.

Both their limbs had been restored.

Clad in an enormous hood and black robe, Mr. K disregarded this. In a grating voice, he told Lumian, "Come with me somewhere."

"For what purpose?" Lumian's demeanor toward Mr. K had become more at ease after their collaboration the previous night.

Mr. K nodded and explained, "First, I wish to atone for this incident. Second, through the idol, I want to notify the Lord that you've grown and can serve as His envoy. He will make preparations when the moment is right. Have faith in the Lord, and trust Him completely."

Just going to a location with the True Creator's idol? That's okay… It would be problematic if I actually had to encounter a god… Lumian bowed his head humbly and said, "It would be my honor."

Mr. K came up to him, grasped his arm, and transported him into the spirit world via teleportation.

Traversing dense layers of colors and innumerable indescribable transparent beings, the pair arrived at a cathedral.

The cathedral seemed to be located in a deep valley. Its surface was a watery black, decorated with many human bones. The top resembled the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's cathedral, forming a hemispherical shape.

Mr. K silently entered through the open door, his back slightly hunched.

Lumian followed closely behind.

Then, he saw the vast but dimly lit prayer hall and an enormous, pitch-black cross standing in the cathedral's depths.

A naked male idol hung upside down from the cross. Rust-

colored iron nails jutted out from various parts of its body, each nail stained with vivid red blood.

Is this the True Creator's idol? Lumian's heart raced as he quickly averted his gaze.

What he had seen in the Church of The Fool, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and the God of Steam and Machinery Church were merely Sacred Emblems. There were no idols. He had assumed Mr. K was referring to the Sacred Emblem as an idol.

Mr. K walked until he was four to five meters from the idol and halted.

Lumian trailed slightly behind and stopped.

As he made his way from the entrance, he got a clear look at the hanging idol's face.

Its nose, mouth, and ears were quite blurry, with only a rough outline. However, its eyes were very distinct and tightly closed, as if enduring all the pain and guilt.

Mr. K drew a cross on his chest and cried out in a raspy voice, "Praise you! Praise you for creating everything! Praise you for shouldering the world's sins!"

Lumian followed suit in offering praise.

Abruptly, his head spun, and his eyes burned with a sense of familiarity.

Wh— Lumian's spiritual intuition alerted him that the negative effects of the Baynfel contract had been triggered. The effect was: In scenes intimately connected to Baynfel's past, he would witness truths better left unknown.

This place is closely tied to Baynfel's past? Was he once a clergyman of the True Creator? Lumian suppressed his curiosity as he continued to focus on the ground.

Suddenly, his eyes froze.

He spotted a blurry, lizard-like creature.

It was the lizard-like elf that had appeared in his dream about Cordu. The same one that had crawled out of Aurore's mouth!

It might have influenced Aurore, stopping her from seeking Hela's help in time!

At the conclusion of the Tree of Shadow incident, the lizard-

like elf had also made an appearance.

Why was it present now, in the True Creator's cathedral?

As Mr. K sprawled on the ground, pressing his face firmly against the watery black stone bricks, Lumian instinctively looked up.

He witnessed the huge pitch-black cross transform into an illusory shape, as if it loomed over a mountain range's peak. On the indistinct figure hanging upside down, lizard-like elves crawled in and out, circling and dancing…

Lumian watched the scene in a daze as Mr. K's slightly muffled voice resounded in his ears.

"Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for the transgressions I've made."

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Chapter 736 Night

Can you accept such an outcome?

Inside an empty house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Angoulême de Fran?ois, wearing a lion headdress, stood by the window, gazing down at the gas streetlamps below, patiently waiting.

After losing contact, he and Hidden Blade had switched emergency communication methods. They aimed to quickly re-establish contact, even without Madame Hela's messenger.

Early the previous morning, as soon as he had wrapped up the Moran Avigny case, he immediately tried to locate Hidden Blade.

Finally, Hidden Blade Franca, dressed in her assassin outfit, emerged from the shadows.

Angoulême cut right to it and asked, "Did you take down Moran Avigny?"

"Otherwise?" Franca replied with a smile.

Although Overseer Perle's vortex warning hung over Franca's head like a sharp blade, preventing her from relaxing just because Moran Avigny was dead and she had the intel, Franca wouldn't let it ruin her mood or make her solemn or anxious.

The Major Arcana card holders would naturally worry about something so serious, and she and the others just needed to follow orders and complete the missions. No point fretting.

Plus, the intel they obtained was crucial and valuable. Either the Eternal Blazing Sun Church or the Demoness Sect would definitely be grateful!

Franca was filled with anticipation over this.

"It really was you guys…" Angoulême couldn't help but sigh.

Hidden Blade and her team really acted fast. They had mentioned dealing with a government minister, and not long after, they actually attacked and succeeded.

Franca covered for Lumian, saying, "We were waiting for Moran Avigny to walk into the mirror himself. Surprisingly, the Aurora Order suddenly assassinated him, forcing him into our trap early."

Combined with the scene details, Angoulême slightly nodded and said, "So it was just a coincidence…"

This aligned with what the Purifiers had confirmed.

Angoulême then asked, "So where's Moran Avigny now?"

"Dead," Franca said with a tongue click. "He was definitely a Mirror Person, and gave us lots of important intel."

"What intel?" Angoulême quickly asked.

Franca chuckled and raised her right hand, gently rubbing her thumb and index finger together. "Where's my informant fee?"

Angoulême said in exasperated amusement, "Don't forget I contributed a lot to the Moran Avigny operation. Even if I don't get spoils, it's no problem to hear the intel, right?"

Franca, who always prided herself on fairly "splitting loot," awkwardly cleared her throat.

"Just kidding. Just kidding. But that intel is super important. Your superior will definitely reward you. Don't forget to help me collect my fee!"

"Get to the point," Angoulême replied in a deep voice.

It wasn't that he was stingy about the fee, but Hidden Blade had twice emphasized how crucial the intel was, making him eager.

Franca omitted Tarot Club and Aurora Order details, but started from capturing Jebus to Overseer Perle's painted self appearing and Lumian's theory about the whole situation.

Initially, Angoulême stayed relatively composed. Mirror People problems barely factored into Purifier expectations. But when Moran Avigny was tricked into revealing Roselle Gustav led the Mirror People, Angoulême's head started buzzing louder and louder.

Why do Hidden Blade and the others always get mixed up in such major situations?

How long has it been since the Hostel incident? Why is there another "vortex"?

After Franca finished, Angoulême couldn't help but raise his right hand and pinch his throbbing, headdress-concealed forehead. His emotions were so scrambled he was speechless.

Franca smugly asked, "How's that? Project Vortex, the Mirror People, and intel about a hidden traitor—pretty important stuff, right?"

Noticing Angoulême's grave gaze and slightly moving, teeth-grinding mouth, Franca instinctively added, "Don't blame me! We're not causing these problems, Trier's just uniquely prone to all kinds of chaos. We're victims too!"

Angoulême slowly exhaled and said, "I'll… submit this intel… tonight. I won't forget to pass along my informant's reward request. What do you want?"

At the mention of "tonight," Angoulême's emotions surged and he paused a moment.

He had just finished his workday an hour ago and left Saint Vièvе Cathedral. Now he had to return!

I'm Agent 007, not some societal slave working from midnight to midnight every damn day! Angoulême inwardly cursed, but still appeared calm, reliable, and emotionally stable.

Franca deeply pondered and said, "All the Pleasure potion ingredients."

She had considered her Affliction potion could be rewarded by the Demoness Sect, but not Jenna's. She could only rely on the authorities.

"Aren't you already at Pleasure?" Angoulême muttered, giving up asking. He nodded, "I'll help get it."

He didn't ask about Hidden Blade's Pleasure potion preparations, just as he didn't ask how she and her crew survived facing a demigod's painted self.

Franca was overjoyed at 007's promise.

Getting Pleasure from the Church and Affliction from the Demoness Sect, surely Madam Judgment would reward me too. I sold this one intel three times… I can now understand Lumian's glee at triple-dipping mission rewards!

Angoulême rubbed his temples and muttered, "There are Cardinals not from the Sun pathway, and way more diocese bishops. I really don't know what we'll uncover next. I just hope the impact isn't too massive."

He meant the April Fool's insider in the Eternal Church. With a clear lead, it wouldn't be hard for that party to be discovered, even if they worked through a Broker.

Without waiting for Franca's reply, Angoulême pondered a moment and said, "The humanoid Sealed Artifact transaction is approved. Let me know the transaction details anytime."

"It's finally approved…" Franca criticized the bureaucracy and curiously asked, "What's the story with that humanoid Artifact?"

She had encountered the humanoid Sealed Artifact during the sea prayer ritual and knew its abnormal power.

Angoulême shook his head. "I'm not cleared for that intel. All I know is she used to be a Sequence 4 Spectator demigod. Later she suddenly went insane, but I don't know if she went mad before an evil god corrupted her, or because of the corruption."

"It was probably the latter," Franca said thoughtfully. "Aren't Spectator Beyonders usually emotionally stable and hard to lose control?"

Angoulême rejected Franca's statement. "From what I know, Spectators normally don't have issues. But when they do, it gets really messy."

"True," Franca thought of I Know Someone.

After chatting a while, Angoulême bid Hidden Blade farewell and left the empty room.

Before leaving, he quickly reviewed the intel, then inwardly sighed with a heavy heart.

Aren't there way too many mystical incidents in Trier?

…

In the market district, Jenna seized a chance to act as a Witch again.

Wearing a black cloak and dark dress, she walked the shadowed street, pondering new acting directions as she looked for an opportunity.

I can't just equate Witches with bad deeds. Sinister, dark acts aren't necessarily bad…

Among the Witch legends I've gathered so far, many focused on Witches using mystical and sinister dark powers to help others fulfill desires, tempting them to stumble…

These legends likely contain remnants of acts by Demonesses posing as Witches. I could try imitating them. Plus, tempting others into depravity is a deeper way for an Instigator. Pleasure's acting also corrupts the target…

Yes, the mystical powers of sinisterness and darkness, tempting depravity and depravity brings calamity…

Jenna's thoughts gradually became more clear.

With these in mind, she turned onto Rue Anarchie, intending to find a chance to act as a Witch on this chaotic street.

After a few steps, Jenna suddenly heard someone singing hysterically, "Trier, a city dressed in gold,

"A ball that endures 'til dawn unfolds;

"Chicken roasted, dripping with oil's grace,

"A castle cake to fill each eager embrace.

"A bow-tied attendant glides 'mongst the guests,

"Merrily dancing with joy and delight.

"My beloved, hidden 'midst the crowd,

"Among them, my love resides,

"In the Capital of Joy, forever Trier!"

This voice… Jenna peered from the shadows at Auberge du Coq Doré and saw Lumian, in a thick brown jacket, sitting on the third floor windowsill, holding a green liquid-filled bottle.

Hadn't he gone to the Aurora Order and never returned? Jenna frowned and stepped out of the shadow.

Lumian noticed her and smiled. He leaped down from the third floor, landing steadily before her.

"Why are you here?" Jenna asked with concern.

Lumian smiled casually. "I suddenly missed this place. Came back for a drink."

Sensing Lumian's strange excitement, Jenna pondered a moment then asked, "Did something happen?"

"No," Lumian denied quickly. He emphasized, "I'm fine."

With an absinthe bottle in hand, he headed towards Rue Anarchie's exit. Jenna trailed closely behind, not inquiring further.

Under the crimson moonlight and scattered gas lamps, the silent Lumian suddenly smiled and announced, "I'm about to start blaspheming. No, it's already begun."

He didn't turn around and kept walking.

"Haven't you been blaspheming all this while?" Jenna cautiously probed with Lumian's usual self-deprecation.

Lumian's gaze stayed fixed ahead as he smiled. "It's different this time."

He quickened his pace and didn't mention it again.

Jenna glanced at Lumian's muddy leather boots and the dirty but dry surroundings. She pursed her lips and didn't press further.

Lumian continued walking, occasionally humming a tune, occasionally chatting with Jenna and joking with a smile.

He made his way back to his rented apartment and entered his room.

Jenna stood quietly in the living room, watching Lumian close the bedroom's wooden door.

In the dark room, lit only by crimson moonlight, Lumian sat at his desk, unfolded a piece of paper, and picked up a fountain pen.

He didn't light the gas wall lamp, nor create a blazing fireball. In the pitch-black, he positioned the pen under the faint light.

Amidst paper rustling, Lumian's smile faded, and his wrist slowed.

Finally, he penned the unusually brief letter: "Honorable Madam Magician, I'd like to meet you."

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Chapter 737 Opinion

□□After having the messenger dispatched to deliver the letter, Lumian sat at his desk, gazing at the dark curtains that seeped in the crimson moonlight, patiently awaiting Madam Magician's arrival.

After an indeterminate period of time, a resplendent starlight emerged from the dark room, coalescing into the figure of Magician.

She had changed into a brownish-yellow cotton dress with white trimmings.

"Good evening, Madam Magician," Lumian said with a glance around. "I have something important to discuss."

Magician grasped his meaning and immediately condensed the surrounding darkness into an illusory glass barrier, curling up to block out the infiltration of the crimson moonlight and the sounds from outside.

"What's so important?" Madam Magician inquired once secrecy was ensured.

Lumian conjured a blazing white flame to use as a chandelier. After a few moments of silence, he said, "I've confirmed the origins of the lizard-like elf."

"It's not an evil god from outside the barrier?" Madam Magician wore a thoughtful expression.

Lumian's lips curled into a slight smile. "An evil god in a way, but one not from outside the barrier."

Magician frowned and said, "Give me the details."

Lumian recounted in his deep voice his pact with Penitent Baynfel and the corresponding negative effects. He described seeing the True Creator idol and a lizard-like elf in the secret cathedral of the Aurora Order, as well as the illusory scene suspected to be a divine kingdom.

Madam Magician didn't interrupt him, listening attentively. Then, she let out a long sigh and said, "In fact, I had suspected that the lizard-like elf was related to Him, but whether it was the Spectator pathway's Mythical Creature form or the Hanged Man pathway's Mythical Creature form, they were clearly different from that elf. Nothing similar had manifested in the past five to six years. Additionally, the two experts at decrypting and deciphering dreams were more inclined to believe that the elf came from an evil god outside the barrier. This led me to abandon that guess.

"From the looks of it, that entity had been involved in Cordu's catastrophe for a long time.

"That's the only explanation that's complete. How could He, who's been listening and watching, not notice such a major incident that has been unfolding for so long and involves members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society? How could He not take advantage of the situation?"

"What does He want?" Lumian's expression subtly contorted.

Magician stared at Lumian for a few seconds before sighing again.

"I can only confirm one goal. That is to create a Beyonder capable of rapid digestion and rapid advancement along the Hunter pathway.

"Think about it. It's been just over half a year since you became a Hunter. You're already a Sequence 5 Beyonder, and your Reaper potion has been greatly digested. Perhaps in two to three months, you can consider breaking through to godhood and advancing to Sequence 4, becoming a demigod.

"On this 'journey,' whether it was the fake Angel status brought about by sealing Termiboros, the obtained boons of the Inevitability pathway, or some tempering and digestion opportunities filled with calculated arrangements, they all contributed significantly to your growth.

"He wants a Red Priest and is pushing for a decisive battle between the Red Priest and the Primordial Demoness.

"I was worried that your advancement might be going too smoothly, but now it seems that a price has already been exacted for what fate bestowed, and a deposit has been paid."

Under the blazing white flames, Lumian spoke in a deep, raspy voice, "I'd rather remain an ordinary person."

Madam Magician shook her head with a complex smile.

"As the apocalypse approaches, with Aurore's background and condition, even if no catastrophe had occurred in Cordu, it's inevitable that you'll encounter one eventually. Have you forgotten the helplessness and pain of being an ordinary person in that catastrophe?"

Lumian clenched his fists involuntarily and lowered his head. "I-I just don't want to obtain power this way."

Madam Magician didn't dwell on the topic and said, "He definitely has ulterior motives. For example, a humanoid Sealed Artifact like you can effectively gather evil god influences around you wherever you go, exposing their schemes in advance and giving us more time to deal with them."

Lumian remained silent and didn't respond.

Madam Magician glanced at him and asked with an obvious sigh, "What's your next move?"

Lumian's body trembled slightly, as if he couldn't suppress his emotions.

Gritting his teeth, he said, "I want to punch Him!"

Upon saying this, Lumian's eyes turned bloodshot.

To be honest, he had never harbored a firm desire to seek revenge on a deity. His original plan was to eliminate the key members of April Fool's and the Sanson family of the Sinners organization. Then, he would work hard to become an Angel and extract most of Termiboros's strength. Then, he would release the weak Angel of Inevitability and kill Him.

He knew that the source of Cordu's catastrophe was actually the entity known as Inevitability. However, due to the vast disparity between them and his natural fear of deities, he had only occasionally cursed and spoken harsh words. He hadn't truly put the other party on his revenge list.

And now, he wanted those damned deities to fall from heaven, like meteors streaking through the night sky!

Madam Magician looked at Lumian with a serious expression and asked, "Do you know what you mean by that?"

"I know," Lumian nodded slowly. "I've been waiting all day before requesting to meet you because I've been questioning myself seriously."

He had questioned himself again and again, sometimes in anger, sometimes in sorrow. When he calmed down a little, he questioned himself again.

Madam Magician regarded him with a familiar pity in her eyes.

This time, Lumian knew clearly what she was pitying.

A human yearning to punch a deity.

Lumian gazed back at the Major Arcana card holder, his gaze unwavering.

After a while, Magician nodded slightly and said, "You're telling me the target because you want me to provide effective advice on your idea and make it a little more feasible?

"Yes, my suggestion is that before Mr. Fool awakens to some extent, endure your impulses and work hard to improve yourself. Only by becoming a demigod can you have a chance to sit at that table of cards—of course, that depends on whether you appear there in the form of cards or chips. Don't be disheartened. It's the same

for you, me, and the other demigods. Our will and choices can also play an important role at critical moments. We can also exploit the card players."

Lumian asked in a deep voice, "Will Mr. Fool—will he help me?"

Madam Magician nodded solemnly. "Yes."

Unknowingly, her eyes grew brighter. "Mr. Fool will protect us. All of us are willing to make sacrifices for this world, but we can't be sacrificed."

Lumian suddenly let out a sigh of relief, as if he had lost all strength. He couldn't stand steadily, and his body swayed slightly.

He had been suppressing his emotions with all his might until now.

Madam Magician looked at him and pondered for a moment before saying, "I must remind you that that entity should already be aware of your thoughts. This is because you displayed an abnormality in front of His idol.

"I'm not criticizing you; I'm just stating a fact. In that situation, even Clowns and Spectators would find it difficult to control their emotions and expressions, let alone an Ascetic like you."

"I know…" Lumian replied with difficulty.

Before Madam Magician exposed him, he had harbored a glimmer of hope.

Magician chuckled and said, "That's also a positive thing. The fact that you're still alive suggests that you're still useful to Him and can be used. You haven't repaid the full price that fate has exacted of you. As long as you don't give up on yourself or participate in actions that can disrupt His important plans, He will ignore your hatred. He might even continue to allow you to encounter opportunities and obtain things until you step onto the stage He has decided for you.

"It's frustrating, but that's the reality. In the eyes of an existence like Him, you are currently just a speck of dust. He can reduce you to dust at any time without worrying about your thoughts."

After a long silence, Lumian asked in a slightly hoarse voice, "You mean, before Mr. Fool awakens, I'm to make full use of that entity's arrangements?"

Magician nodded slightly and said, "Using an enemy's resources to strengthen yourself is also a way of seeking revenge. Of course, this requires greater caution and restraint. As I mentioned earlier, a price is always exacted for what fate has bestowed. You have to weigh whether you're willing to pay the corresponding price in the future."

Lumian looked down at the floor illuminated by the incandescent white light and said, "Okay."

He then asked, "When will Mr. Fool begin awakening?"

"No one knows," Madam Magician replied with a smile. "But there's no need to be disheartened by this answer. I foresee that we tarot card holders will play an important role in this matter. Let's work hard together."

"How do we?" Lumian pressed.

Madam Magician pondered for a moment and said, "First, focus on yourself. Then, wait patiently for the right opportunity."

The right opportunity? Lumian couldn't fathom how they, the Minor Arcana card holders, were involved in awakening Mr. Fool. All he could do was cautiously ask, "Madam, did you deliberately place Penitent on the messenger list?"

Without Baynfel's negative influence, he wouldn't have had a chance to see the lizard-like elf in the True Creator's hidden cathedral.

"Yes and no," Madam Magician replied. "I know he has a certain connection to that entity. I believe our collaboration with the Aurora Order is fragile. You were sent as an undercover agent, not a true member. You might encounter certain problems in the future, and there's a chance that he will bring about new possibilities. That's why I placed him on the messenger list to see if fate will allow you to choose him. I never expected this to unveil a very important mystery."

Lumian had long grown accustomed to Madam Magician's cryptic responses. He swiftly filtered through her thoughts.

He spoke in a deep voice, "Madam, I wish to explore Mr. Hanged Man's Blue Avenger soon."

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Chapter 738 Original Arrangement

□□Magician concurred tersely. "No problem. I understand the urgency. I'll bring you there once Mr. Hanged Man and I confirm the time."

Lumian fell silent for a moment before saying, "Thank you."

Madam Magician pondered for a moment and reminded him, "But don't be too hasty. Emperor Roselle once said, 'More haste, less speed.'

"It's not just because impatience blinds you and affects your judgment, causing you to make wrong choices in many matters. It's also because consuming the potion to advance has a requirement on your mental state. You should be well aware of this."

"I understand," Lumian said with a sigh.

Madam Magician glanced around and joked, "You were really tense just now. We've been talking this whole time, but you didn't even remember to invite me to sit down.

"Yes, the School of Truth's vortex clearly involves higher-level forces. We'll take over the subsequent investigations. Your primary mission is to locate the relatively important Mirror People according to what Moran Avigny had shared. I suspect that something in the special mirror world is an important part of the vortex.

"This time, you've obtained crucial information. We Major Arcana card holders won't be stingy with the rewards. Of course, it's for your team, not just you. The exact distribution is up to you."

Upon hearing the last sentence, Lumian suddenly fell into a daze. He muttered to himself, "Again…

"Is this also what fate has bestowed?"

"I can't say for sure that's not the case," Madam Magician replied with a self-deprecating smile. "Your psychological and mental state are better than I expected. You haven't reached the point where you need treatment again, but you seem to have suffered from the aftereffects of the trauma known as Fate's Bestowment. Everything you see seems arranged as if by fate's hand."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she added, "Actually, there's no problem with that. It's good to be vigilant, but don't put too much pressure on yourself. Your mind is like an eraser. If you're too tense, it'll snap. You can be vigilant about details, but you have to relax. Think about it. You can't resist a real arrangement

anyway. Why make yourself unable to sleep well, eat well, and become more and more neurotic?"

"Yes." Lumian had to admit that Madam Magician had a point.

Magician expressed satisfaction at Lumian's ability to self-regulate.

"Of course, once you discover any arrangements that are clearly problematic, remember to inform me immediately by reciting the honorific name.

"For the reward this time, I'll include the Sequence 4 potion formula of the Hunter pathway, facilitating your quest for items on the Blue Avenger. As for the rewards for the Two of Cups, Seven of Cups, and Four of Swords, I don't know either. It mainly depends on what Judgment, The Hermit, and the others will offer."

Lumian had no objections to this arrangement. Even if Madam Magician didn't mention it or believed that the information about the vortex and the Mirror People wasn't worth the demigod-level potion formula, he would take the initiative to request that the other party provide it first before making up for the missing contributions.

As Lumian regained his composure, a question crossed his mind.

"Madam, Mr. K of the Aurora Order has already divulged my contributions in front of the True Creator's idol, requesting Him to put me up as a candidate Oracle. When an official Oracle falls into danger, I will become the prime candidate to replace them. When the time comes, will I truly become a certain Mr. of the Aurora Order?

"In addition, Mr. K also promised material rewards in the next few days."

Magician nodded slightly and said, "The Aurora Order's organizational structure is quite peculiar. Although Oracles have a Saint directly above them, most Oracles can directly hear the ravings of that entity and His instructions, giving them strong autonomy. Yes, they still follow the orders of their Saint superiors and report to them on most matters, but there are a few matters that completely bypass their superiors. Recommending a candidate Oracle is one of them.

"An oracle of God can only come from God's revelation."

After a brief sigh, Magician chuckled and said, "As long as there's no major problem with the screening, feel free to accept the material rewards. You've already received enough of fate's bestowments. Any more and there won't be any substantial changes.

"I don't think being an Oracle will happen. The Aurora Order's Oracles have a fixed preaching area. It can't beat letting you run around and trigger various hidden dangers of evil gods. It will help you digest the potion. Uh…"

At this point, Magician's expression gradually turned odd.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to inquire. He waited for the Major Arcana card holder to take the initiative to explain.

After a few seconds, Magician maintained her expression and hesitantly said, "Perhaps, that person's original arrangement was for you to be a certain Mr. for a while.

"The Hunter pathway's Sequence 4 is known as Iron-blooded Knight. It makes all consumers transform into men. Its ritual requires the formation of a team of at least 30 people. They should be able to comprehend your intentions based on your gaze and actions after long periods of nurturing—as though all of you are nearly one. The higher the team's strength and tacit understanding, the better the effect of the ritual." Think about it. What's the most striking characteristic of the Aurora Order? It's fanaticism.

"After becoming a certain Mr., you will undoubtedly have your own jurisdiction and a large number of subordinates. They are fanatical and will completely follow the orders of a deity's oracle like you. With some training, they can fulfill the requirements of the ritual. What you need to worry about is how to increase their strength and tacit understanding to make the ritual more effective."

Wh— The original plan was for me to become an Oracle after digesting the Reaper potion, allowing me to establish a team to complete the ritual as quickly as possible. How can I carry out this ritual now? Franca and the others are without a problem, but there are too few of them… Lumian couldn't help but frown.

Upon seeing this, Madam Magician chuckled and said, "The Church of Knowledge, well-versed in the Hunter path, offered an alternative."

"Of course, the prerequisite is that you can tame Ludwig. Angels can offset most quantity requirements."

"Angel level?" Lumian finally obtained information about Ludwig's power from Madam Magician.

"Yes." Madam Magician didn't elaborate further.

Taming Ludwig? All I can do now is "bribe" him and give simple commands… Lumian fell deep into thought.

Madam Magician glanced at him and said, "You can wait until you digest the Reaper potion and visit the City of Exiles, Morora, before deciding which method to use to meet the ritual's requirements."

"Right, let's discuss the vortex details through letters."

Lumian nodded and watched as Madam Magician vanished into thin air.

Gazing at the gradually expanding dark border, he closed his eyes and recalled everything he had seen and heard that day.

Unbeknownst to him, he clenched his fists tightly, and blazing white flames surged from his fists, burning fiercely.

Jenna sat in an armchair in the living room, quietly waiting for Lumian to open the door and leave. The sound of gnawing and chewing echoed from the dining room.

Lumian carried the unfinished bottle of absinthe to the balcony, settled into a chair, and took a sip.

Jenna approached him with light footsteps and observed him for a few seconds. "You're in better shape."

"You can tell that too?" Lumian asked nonchalantly without turning his head.

Jenna pulled up a chair and sat down, sneering.

"Your silent and reserved demeanor makes me feel more at ease than your previously excited and talkative demeanor."

Lumian gazed at the night outside the balcony and remained silent for a long time. Jenna didn't ask any questions either.

Suddenly, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "I saw that lizard-like elf."

Jenna had heard him talk about Cordu and understood what it meant. She said in surprise, "Didn't you go to the Aurora Order to meet Mr. K? Why… Is that lizard-like elf related to the Aurora Order?"

"It stems from the one they believe in," Lumian's voice seemed to emerge from the depths of darkness.

"No wonder…" Jenna suddenly understood Lumian's previous state. "Madam Judgment mentioned that the one the Aurora Order believes in is close to Mr. Fool in power…"

It wasn't something mortals could face directly, let alone exact revenge on!

After a brief silence, Jenna understood and said, "Did you just meet Madam Magician?"

"You've grown quite smart after drinking the Witch potion," Lumian turned to Jenna.

Jenna couldn't help but ask, "Can't Hunters speak nicely?"

She paused for a moment before adding, "What did Madam Magician say?"

"She said to endure it for now and wait for Mr. Fool to wake up before considering what to do next," Lumian replied simply.

Jenna tersely acknowledged, momentarily at a loss for words.

After a moment, she stood up and went to Ludwig's side in the dining room to retrieve a glass from the balcony. She snatched the bottle of absinthe from Lumian's hand and poured a third of it for herself.

Jenna had just taken a sip of the dreamy green liquid when her face instinctively furrowed.

"Heck, why do you people like to drink absinthe? It tastes awful!" As a former Showy Diva, Jenna had drunk plenty of alcohol, but she still couldn't accept the taste of absinthe.

Lumian scoffed but didn't offer an explanation.

Jenna casually chatted, "I once read a book about a writer whose name I can't remember. He said that those who enjoy absinthe either use it to pretend they are experienced or use it to reminisce about their experiences…"

Lumian listened quietly, picked up the bottle, and took another mouthful.

The slightly burning alcohol slid down his throat, leaving behind a familiar bitterness.

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Chapter 739 Reminder

□□In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca waited a while for Jenna to return.

She sniffed and asked in confusion, "Have you been drinking?"

Didn't Jenna say she was going to the market district to find an opportunity to act as a Witch?

Could it be that she had been deliberately drinking and engaging in sting operations to carry out law enforcement?

Jenna removed her black cloak and said to Franca with a solemn expression, "I ran into Lumian."

"Huh?" Franca was taken aback. "He's in the market district? Didn't he go to the Aurora Order to meet Mr. K? I thought he hadn't returned because he was being tested and preparing to choose a reward…"

Jenna didn't hold back and recounted Lumian's condition and words in almost complete detail.

"Is that so…" Franca's emotions became complicated.

She understood Lumian's current feelings and sympathized with the plight of Muggle Aurore. She still remembered that the Ancient Sun God, suspected to be from the Third Epoch and whom the Aurora Order believed in, had returned in some form. There was a high chance that the Ancient Sun God was an earlier transmigrator, a transmigrator like them!

Transmigrators harming transmigrators… It's the way of the April Fool's group; likewise for the Ancient Sun God… Franca sighed silently and decided to summon Madame Hela's messenger later. She would inform the vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society about the School of Truth's vortex operation and the True Creator's role in the catastrophe at Cordu, and request a gathering of all members soon.

It wasn't that she wanted to publicly warn all members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society at the gathering about the True Creator and the Ancient Sun God. Certain matters could become catastrophic if people below a certain level knew about them. After all, that entity possessed the ability to know whenever He was mentioned.

Franca hoped to raise the vigilance of Hela and the other organizers of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society before indirectly alerting the other members through them.

Furthermore, Franca found the Overseer of the School of Truth formidable, but that wasn't the most terrifying aspect about her and her accomplices.

Franca's greatest unease stemmed from the Broker's ability and willingness to unite the evil god sects, which had been in disarray, fighting independently and even attacking each other. The Hostel plan was the embryonic form of such a change, and perhaps the vortex incident represented the outcome in a stepped sequence.

Facing the evil god cults that had begun to collaborate, Franca wanted the factions she associated herself with to take action and collaborate as well. To this end, she was willing to share information about the vortex and the Mirror People with Madame Hela, a demigod likely backed by the Evernight Church, free of charge.

She had already written and sought Madam Judgment's opinion on this matter, and her response was affirmative.

"How is he now?" Franca asked with concern, contemplating whether to drink with Lumian until dawn to express her support and comfort him.

"He's fine for now," Jenna replied after a few seconds of contemplation. "Perhaps it's also because the one the Aurora Order believes in is far superior to him. Although the hatred is real, it's very intangible and can't be acted upon for a long time."

She had authority to speak on such matters.

Franca tersely acknowledged her words and contemplated her next move.

At dawn, Franca visited Clarice immediately and reported her encounter to the Demoness of Black. The latter expressed her approval and inquired about Franca's recent needs. Franca didn't stand on ceremony and mentioned her desire for the ingredients for the Affliction potion.

Back then, the Demoness of Black didn't agree or reject her request. She only instructed Franca to visit in two days and to find the Mirror People that Moran Avigny had mentioned as soon as possible. She could provide any assistance Franca needed.

As for the Mirror People that Moran Avigny had mentioned—Griffith, Palia, and Caratanza Tamara—none of them used their real names in reality. They could only rely on their unclear identities to investigate. Franca hoped to obtain official "assistance" through 007, and she also wanted to see if there were any members of the Moses Ascetic Order in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. This was one of the reasons why she had requested a full-scale gathering soon.

The only Mirror Person who could be identified was Trier's Deputy Commissioner of Police, Sport. Franca had investigated the situation before dawn and realized that the Mirror Person had vanished. It appeared that the fleeing Overseer had used some method to alert the Mirror People. For example, news of Moran Avigny's accident had quickly spread.

…

After downing the last of the absinthe and saying goodbye to Jenna, Lumian rubbed his temples and headed back to his bedroom.

Under the crimson moonlight pouring through the curtains, he noticed a folded letter on the table.

Madam Magician? Didn't she just leave not too long ago? Lumian frowned and picked up the letter.

It was indeed from Madam Magician, with a few short paragraphs:

"I forgot to mention we ran into Loki while tracking the School of Truth's Overseer.

"His condition has changed significantly. It seems something went wrong during his resurrection after the sea prayer ritual. This led to the owner of Castle Dylan, the former Secret Order leader, being resurrected inside him somehow.

"Zaratul has come back from the dead and become the Celestial Worthy's attendant. Right, but He hasn't fully taken over Loki's body, and Loki hasn't died completely. This has turned them into an unstable, stitched-together monster in mind and soul.

"For now, don't try finding Castle Dylan and expending Loki's remaining resurrection. It's best to avoid any situations where he could track you down."

Zaratul… Franca had said the former Secret Order leader played a major role in Emperor Roselle's rise, but ultimately betrayed the Emperor… The Sauron family's Vermonda Sauron seemed to have gone insane from His and the Emperor's schemes, prompting Him to enter Fourth Epoch Trier alone… Is Loki considered half-dead now? When Zaratul fully controls his body, he should be completely dead. What a shame… Lumian regretted not finishing off Loki's final life himself, but didn't feel too disappointed or indignant.

He had already caused Loki's demise twice, after all!

After burning the letter, Lumian pondered for a moment, then left the bedroom. He sat across from Ludwig, who wore yellow cotton pajamas and a matching nightcap, watching the boy quickly nibble on a cold bone-in steak.

Ludwig stayed unfazed by Lumian's gaze, continuing his feast.

After nearly a minute, Lumian probed, "Are you willing to call me Godfather?"

Ludwig glanced up at him, then lowered his head, scooped up some banana puree, and spooned it into his mouth.

Lumian changed the question. "Are you willing to follow my orders, accept my commands, and build a tacit understanding here?"

This time, Ludwig didn't even look up, his mouth constantly moving.

Lumian silently watched as he slowly took something out of his Traveler's Bag.

It was a mercury eyeball in a glass jar—a Sequence 7 Lucky One Beyonder characteristic of the Monster pathway. It had re-condensed after the Flog boxing gloves shattered.

Ludwig immediately looked up.

Ignoring Ludwig's gaze, Lumian leisurely pulled out the Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic and a few other items, placing them on the dining table in front of him.

Then, he smiled at Ludwig, who wore the yellow cotton nightcap, and said, "Are you willing to call me Godfather?"

Ludwig fell silent for a few seconds before saying in a low voice, "Godfather."

Lumian probed further, "Are you willing to follow my orders, accept my commands, and build a tacit understanding here?"

Without hesitation, Ludwig replied, "I am."

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As he spoke, his eyes were fixed on the pile of items before Lumian.

Sigh… Lumian sighed silently.

He could rely on "food" to control someone, but couldn't rely solely on "food." Otherwise, it'd be so easy for Ludwig to ignore him when there was no "food" around. This likely didn't meet an Iron-blooded Knight's ritual requirements.

Deep in thought, Lumian pointed at the pile and smiled.

"Since you've admitted to being my godson, you can choose one item.

"But there's a condition. You have to answer two or three of my questions."

Ludwig hesitated a moment, then spoke with a stern look, "Okay."

"Which one do you want?" Lumian asked kindly.

Looking around, Ludwig yearned for every item, but was reluctant to abandon any.

Finally overcoming himself, he pointed at the Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic and said, "That one!"

You really want that Beyonder characteristic… Can it be turned into some magical dish or cocktail? Lumian put away the other items and smiled at Ludwig.

"First question:

"What pathway does your Beyonder power belong to? What are its characteristics? What's your rough Sequence level?"

He hoped to gain inspiration for taming the sealed Angel based on Ludwig's Beyonder pathway information.

Ludwig muttered under his breath, "That's three questions."

Lumian pretended not to hear.

Seeing his protests were futile, Ludwig could only pick up some beef and mutton to munch on. He mumbled, "Yes, yes…"

It seemed he couldn't recall the original name, so he had to find another term for it.

"It's the Gourmet pathway."

Lumian wasn't surprised at all. "No wonder you're always acting like you're savoring delicacies and ingredients."

Ludwig added earnestly, "To put it simply, it's a way to get superpowers by being hungry and eating.

"What corresponds to your Sequence 9 is Tramp. You lose everything and are always searching for food, barely surviving."

Could you be the ultimate Tramp embodiment? You'd even lost your mind, only never forgetting to eat… From that description, I can't tell what abilities a Tramp has… But Lumian didn't mock him.

Rather than detail the Tramp Sequence, Ludwig said, "Sequence 8 is Glutton."

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Chapter 740 Depriver

740 Depriver

"Glutton?" Lumian said approvingly, "Quite the image."

Ludwig ignored Lumian's mockery and continued with the brief introduction, "At this Sequence, hunger truly becomes ingrained in our bodies, allowing us to evolve around it."

"What kinds of evolutions are there?" Lumian was concerned that Ludwig would only mention this about Gluttons, just as he had described the Tramp Sequence. Therefore, he took the initiative to inquire.

Ludwig paused for a few seconds to swallow his food.

Then, he stuffed a small piece of lemon cake into his mouth and replied in a muffled manner, "Internal organs that are better suited for digesting food and absorbing energy. Stronger, more powerful teeth, a bite force and appetite that exceed normal limits...

"This will help us obtain different abilities from food more efficiently. We won't have to worry about being affected by the toxins, viruses, and bacteria that food brings."

"In other words, even if it's highly toxic, as long as you consume it with your mouth and treat it as food, you won't die from the poison?" Lumian suddenly felt that Ludwig would make a suitable assistant for Apothecaries.

Ludwig took a sip of milk and shook his head.

"We can't exceed a certain limit. Many Gluttons die from eating random stuff."

And you're not eating random stuff? Lumian scoffed inwardly.

At the same time, he inwardly sighed.

This guy is quite honest. He's indeed like a child most of the time. He actually forgot to protest that I had asked additional questions.

Ludwig set down the milk bottle and picked up a box of cookies.

Amidst the munching sounds, he continued, "The corresponding Sequence 7 is Gourmet.

"At this level, our digestion and eating abilities will improve further. We can discern which ingredients are edible, which are inedible, which ingredients can bring about special effects, and which ingredients need to be combined with others."

Lumian thought seriously before asking, "Is extracting the corresponding information from the consumed food one of a Gourmet's abilities?"

This ability had helped Lumian a great deal.

Ludwig, donning a thick yellow cotton nightcap, nodded obediently. "Yes."

He didn't elaborate on the corresponding abilities.

"Although a Gourmet is useful, I can sense that at this Sequence, you lack sufficient combat strength. Yes, perhaps Tramp will grant you a certain level of street fighting abilities," Lumian commented from his own perspective.

Ludwig didn't argue, nor did he bother to. How could delicacies already in his mouth or subsequent delicacies be less important than what he was talking about?

He peeled a lollipop and placed it in his mouth, a hint of enjoyment on his face.

"Beyond that is what you call Sequence 6—Chef."

"I thought it was Bartender," Lumian teased.

Ludwig pondered seriously and said, "Chefs cover a wider range. It's not like they can only make cocktails."

Lumian nodded pensively.

“Is a Chef's ability to use special ingredients to create mystical dishes, pastries, drinks, and cocktails?"

Ludwig had displayed this ability numerous times.

Ludwig couldn't help but reveal a smug expression.

"That's right. Every Chef has different characteristics and abilities due to the ingredients they've obtained and the food they've prepared.

"Chefs have one thing in common: they have excellent skills in processing ingredients. This includes finding weaknesses and techniques like cutting, chopping, and slicing."

Only at this Sequence would one from the Gourmet pathway truly possess combat strength...

However, a Chef is similar to a Contractee. Their actual combat strength depends on their synergy of abilities. The upper limit is very high, and the lower limit is very low... Lumian, thinking of a Contractee, asked curiously, "Is there a limit to the number of permanent effects a Chef can obtain through various mystical foods?"

As for the negative effects, Lumian, who had eaten Ice Lemon Fish fillet before, had a deep understanding.

Depending on the ingredients and finished products, mystical dishes or cocktails brought different negative effects, but they were significantly weaker than those a Contractee experienced.

"No." Ludwig quickly shook his head. "As long as you fully embrace hunger and greed, there won't be an upper limit."

This upper limit is a little crazy... However, this also means that there's no limit to the number of negative effects. Even if each one is far inferior to the ones brought about by a Contractee, they will undergo a qualitative change after stacking... Lumian pondered for a moment and looked at Ludwig, who had roughly finished his meal.

"That first time we met, when I saw you chowing down on rats, were you just a Glutton or a Gourmet?"

Ludwig didn't try to hide anything.

"Gourmet."

Indeed, he'd been critiquing the dishes I served him.. Lumian pondered for a moment, then said, "Did you recover to Chef status during that Batings Black Insect incident?"

Ludwig curtly confirmed it.

“I was just short to begin with. Eating a Batings Black Insect was all it took to advance."

"What's the next Sequence?" Lumian steered the conversation back on track.

Ludwig dredged up the memories.

"It's Depriver."

"Depriver?" Lumian immediately thought of the Deprivation Bullet he'd gotten from Jebus.

Could this be a transaction from the cult of the Gourmet pathway?

Ludwig thought Lumian wanted him to explain the Depriver's abilities. He recounted, "A Depriver can strip one to three abilities from a target for a period of time. If they then consume part of the target's flesh, they permanently gain one of those abilities, and the target permanently loses it unless they drink a potion again or kill me—no, the corresponding Depriver.

"At Depriver, our recipes get way more range. A ton of formerly inedible things become food.

We can consume things we previously couldn't."

"Give me an example?" Lumian wasn't sure his interpretation matched Ludwig's intentions.

Ludwig looked at him and offered two examples.

"Corruption to a certain degree, as well as fireballs, lightning, and other energy forms."

They can eat way more dangerous stuff and consume things that shouldn't even be considered food... Lumian thought of an enemy he'd faced at the Hostel and something Ludwig just mentioned. He asked for confirmation, "So that ability to process ingredients includes those ingredients too?"

"Yes," Ludwig admitted candidly.

Lumian pulled the matte Deprivation Bullet from his Traveler's Bag and set it on the dining table.

"This is from a Depriver?"

Ludwig's eyes lit up.

"Yes."

He said anxiously, "Can I... can I use it as a prize? I don't want that Beyonder characteristic anymore!"

"I think Beyonder characteristics are way more valuable," Lumian deliberately provoked him.

Ludwig looked sad and said reluctantly, "But I can only choose one.

"I can't actually consume Beyonder characteristics yet. I can only use them as ingredients for now." Is that right... Lumian eyed Ludwig and organized his thoughts.

"How much more do you need to eat to recover to Depriver?"

"The further along I go, the harder it gets. I can't just eat a ton. I need higher quality, higher energy foods." Ludwig pointed at the Deprivation Bullet. "I'd need at least 200 of these bullets to reach Depriver."

Lumian chuckled and whispered devilishly, "What if you ate the Depriver who made this bullet?"

"I could recover immediately!" Ludwig's eyes lit up.

Lumian’s smile widened.

"You don't seem to have strong offensive abilities. I can help you get the stuff to capture the corresponding Beyonders, but you gotta listen to me and do what I say before I become a demigod. We need to be totally in sync.

"That's my promise. You gonna hold up your end of the deal?"

Ludwig hesitated a moment before reluctantly nodding.

"Deal."

Phew, stay calm... This is just the start of the "taming," not the end. Long process ahead...

Lumian suppressed his smile and asked curiously, "Who were you following back then?

"No need for the full title. Just call them something like 'the Great Mother."

Ludwig was caught off guard.

His expression shifted a few times before tears streamed down his face. He wailed like a child.

"I-l don't remember!

"I've forgotten. I've forgotten everything!”

Hearing his cries, Lugano emerged from the guest room in a thick coat.

The Doctor immediately noticed Lumian and asked in confusion, "Why is he crying?"

Is this really the terrifying cannibal from the Dream Festival?

Lumian chuckled in response.

"I showed him delicacies but didn't give him any."

"Alright..." Lugano looked between them in confusion before retreating back to his room.

Lugano's brief appearance made Lumian remember an item, and he had a dangerous thought.

He pulled the remains of Omebella's umbilical cord from his Traveler's Bag and "consulted" Ludwig, who'd gradually stopped sobbing.

"What dishes and cocktails could you make with this?"

That umbilical cord left behind by the Great Mother's Child of God was thought to be just an ingredient for charms, mystical items, and Beyonder weapons. But now Lumian figured a Gourmet might see it differently.

Looking at Omebella's umbilical cord remains, Ludwig licked his lips.

"It could make three types of food with different mystical effects.

"One food would completely cure infertility."

"Don't need that," Lumian said in amusement. "What about the other two foods?"

Ludwig said professionally, "One grants potent self-healing abilities, though inferior to a Vampire's.

"And another..."

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Chapter 741 “Appraisal”

741 “Appraisal”

"What else does it do?"

Lumian, seeing Ludwig pause as if he had concerns, pressed for an answer.

Ludwig stared at the piece of umbilical cord in front of Lumian and hesitated before replying, "It could somewhat alter your aura and lineage, making certain creatures without the necessary wisdom perceive you as a divine child of the ‘Great Mother."

Lumian's expression grew more solemn.

"So, you're saying it could actually integrate the Child of God's lineage into mine, even if it's almost negligible?"

And this would fool creatures of low intelligence or those acting purely on instinct?

"Yes." Ludwig nodded earnestly. "That bit of lineage won't change anything for you, and only creatures directly created by the ‘Great Mother’ or those who have received Her boons could sense it."

This doesn't sound very useful, but in special circumstances, it could be incredibly crucial.

Compared to curing infertility or enhancing self-healing, it has more room for imagination...

Lumian weighed his words and asked, "What are the side effects?"

Could it change my gender? After all, the Great Mother's' Child of God, Omebella, seems to have been female.

Ludwig's greedy gaze shifted from the umbilical cord back to Lumian, and he said regretfully, “For someone else, it might cause the ‘Great Mother's’ Child of God to start developing inside them, but not for you. You just have to worry about the ‘Great Mother’ setting Her sights on you, really watching you."

Lumian was silent for a good twenty seconds before slowly stowing Omebella's umbilical cord remains back into his Traveler's Bag.

He wasn't in a hurry to have Ludwig use the remains to create food with special effects, planning instead to consult Madam Magician's opinion before deciding.

He was willing to take risks, but he wasn't reckless.

"Can I have it now?" Ludwig looked eagerly at the matte Deprivation Bullet.

"One last question." Lumian smiled again, pulling out another item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was a small glass vial containing ancient bloodstain powder.

This came from Demon Warlock Burman, who was guided by a visitor from Resurrection Island named Harrison. He summoned a spirit named Arden from the depths of death and easily killed it, collecting its blood for a future ritual. Lumian got some of this bloodstain powder from his room.

Previously, Lumian had Franca conduct an investigation using Magic Mirror Divination, confirming that it truly came from the depths of the spirit world but yielded no further insights. Now, he wanted the Gourmet to taste it, to see if he could glean more important information.

He remembered clearly; the people of Resurrection Island claimed they could die and revive repeatedly, never aging, and the secret was in their control over the markings from the depths of death.

This might truly be a way to revive the dead.

"Is it edible?" Lumian maintained his smile as he pushed the glass vial with the ancient bloodstain powder towards Ludwig.

Ludwig carefully examined the powder for a while and then opened the bottle cap, touching it a few times with his fingers.

"Yes," he replied, not too eagerly.

"Then eat half of it." Lumian watched expectantly as Ludwig sprinkled a small amount of the ancient bloodstain powder into his mouth, leaving just a bit behind.

Ludwig chewed and tasted it for a while before starting his "gourmet review': "It has a rich aroma of death and eternal rest, originating from the depths of the spirit world.

"It comes from a man in his thirties, with traits of both the Mystery Pryer and Death pathways, in poor mental state, highly prone to emotional instability..."

Hearing this, Lumian raised an eyebrow.

This sounds like it's describing Demon Warlock Burman himself!

But this bloodstain powder is from the evil spirit Arden killed by Burman, right?

"From Intis's Winter Province?" Lumian confirmed his guess.

"Yes." Ludwig smacked his lips.

He shared other insights drawn from the bloodstain powder, each aligning with the Demon Warlock's situation.

This couldn't possibly mean that Burman summoned himself, killed himself, and then collected his own blood, could it? Lumian felt an eerie thrill.

The ancient bloodstain powder surely wasn't left by Burman due to some other issues, as both Franca and Ludwig had confirmed the blood was closely linked to death and the spirit world. Lumian had fought the Demon Warlock twice, believing him to still be alive at those times.

Using the method taught by Resurrection Island's Harrison, Burman summoned an evil spirit from the depths of death that was himself, er, his own marking?

He killed his own marking in the depths of death and found it very weak?

This is hard to believe...

What exactly does Harrison from Resurrection Island want, and what hidden truths lie behind the islanders' resurrections?

Lumian's thoughts raced, feeling that the mysteries of Resurrection Island were no less profound than the high-level events he had experienced before.

"Can you give it to me now?" Ludwig looked again at the Deprivation Bullet, very eagerly.

He handed back the small glass vial with the remaining bit of ancient bloodstain powder to Lumian.

"Yes." Lumian tossed the Deprivation Bullet to Ludwig.

Ludwig caught it, and stuffed the matte bullet into his mouth.

"Eating it directly?" Lumian asked with a chuckle, "Aren't you going to cook it first? Maybe mix a cocktail?"

Ludwig replied with a muffled voice, "No need for that, I can absorb it directly."

As he spoke, he sucked on the Deprivation Bullet like it was an ice pop, pulling it from his mouth again.

Compared to before, the bullet's matte metal casing had noticeably thinned, the intricate symbols etched into its surface now pitted and marked with teeth

impressions.

Ludwig sucked on it three times, then finally, when the inside gunpowder was vaguely visible, he put the bullet in his mouth, chewed it with a crackling sound, and swallowed.

Lumian watched with a grimace, gaining a deeper understanding of the various changes hunger could bring.

After eating the Deprivation Bullet, Ludwig closed his eyes, savoring the taste and longing for more.

Lumian felt a pang of regret for the extraordinary bullet he had obtained from Jebus.

The Weakening Bullet, Deprivation Bullet, and Implosion Bullet had not served their intended purposes, while the Poison Bullet, Putrid Bullet, and Impregnating Bullet had been given to Franca.

"How do you feel?" Lumian inquired.

"Delicious, a familiar taste," Ludwig responded, half-closing his eyes.

After reflecting for a moment, he snapped his eyes open, their gaze sharp and alert.

"G-Godfather, can you quickly find out who made that bullet?”

You little rascal, that's the cult following your deity... But I can't blame you, you're brainless now.. And for an evil god, sacrificing any number of bestowed is worthwhile if it frees an angel from its bonds, returning to an Angel's belly is like returning to the deity’s heaven...

Lumian muttered silently to himself, nodded slightly in agreement, and slowly stood up, heading back to his bedroom.

Lying in bed, he stared at the dark ceiling adorned with a chandelier, feeling no trace of sleepiness despite the lingering scent of absinthe.

After staring silently for who knows how long, Lumian chuckled self-deprecatingly, trying to use Cogitation to help himself fall asleep.

He slowly visualized a crossed-out sphere that grew an eye in his mind.

His state settled, and drowsiness began to creep up.

Just then, Lumian was taken aback.

Cogitation was taught by his sister, and the Cogitation pattern was also casually drawn by her...

Lumian laughed softly to himself, his laughter shaking.

Minutes later, he indulged in reminiscing about his life in Cordu, including those interactions in the dream.

Even those, now looking back, carried a certain indescribable warmth.

As his thoughts wandered, Lumian remembered his sister's contracted creature, White Paper.

I wonder what state White Paper is in...

Strictly speaking, Aurore isn't completely dead, so her contract with White Paper should still exist...

Pity, contract creatures aren't messengers, only the contractee can summon them, otherwise, I'd summon White Paper to see its condition...

Using Aurore's words, seeing something left behind makes you think of that person? Or, liking someone so much you even like their pets?

Eh, it's not that I can't summon, since the Termiboros sealed inside me and I are one, Aurore's soul shard must be too, my summoning is as if Aurore is doing it... Thinking this, Lumian abruptly sat up.

In the darkness, he set up an altar and chanted the spell in the appropriate language: "I!

“I summon in my name: "The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be subordinated, the weak ball that can telepathically connect with me..."

As the incantation echoed, the candlelight flickered gently, but nothing happened.

With Spirit Vision active, Lumian didn't see White Paper that had appeared in his dreams.

Sigh... He lay back down, disappointed.

As time ticked by, the sleepless Lumian suddenly became alert, feeling not the slightest fatigue.

It was six in the morning.

Lumian got up silently and began to clean up the altar.

Just then, a “doll" messenger in a light-gold dress emerged from the void, dropping a dark coin pouch and a folded square letter onto the table.

Is this the reward from Miss Magician? One of them is a Traveler's Bag? Lumian perked up, grabbing the dark coin pouch.

The "doll" messenger glanced at him, pinched her nose and said, "Drunkard! Your clothes stink!"

Uh... Lumian, who hadn't bathed or changed clothes last night, cleared his throat awkwardly in embarrassment and thanked her.

After the "doll" messenger left, he continued to check the rewards.

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Chapter 742 Rewards

742 Rewards

That dark coin pouch was indeed a Traveler's Bag, containing three items: One was a sheepskin parchment of a brownish hue, another was a nearly invisible triangular spike, and the last was a mechanically intricate black revolver.

Lumian didn't rush to take out the rewards but instead unfolded the folded square letter.

“Prize Descriptions: “Ironblood Knight potion formula: See for yourself.

"Traveler's Bag: No need for further introduction, right?

‘Wintry Blade: A mystical item crafted from the dust of ancient vengeful spirits and residual spirituality.

“Any creature pierced by it, even without a visible wound, will fall into an icy rigidity and uncontrollable thoughts, as if possessed by a Wraith.

“Moreover, as the battle persists, the targets of the Wintry Blade, even without direct contact, will gradually find their thoughts slowing and movements becoming stiff and awkward.

"The downside is that the bearer gradually loses body heat, turning toward a necrotic state.

If this exceeds the necessary time limit, the process becomes irreversible.

“Placing it in the Traveler's Bag effectively avoids the negative effects of carrying it. You only need to ensure the battle doesn't exceed three hours. Of course, as a Sequence 5 of the Hunter pathway, a burning Reaper, you could endure the negative effects for at least four hours without other countermeasures."

Reading this, Lumian immediately thought of the Eggers family's golden mask.

That mask could also turn the wearer into a dead being, providing protection for the spirit and consciousness to remain alive until the mask was removed, allowing the wearer to easily revert to their original state.

While wearing Death's golden mask, could I use the Wintry Blade completely unaffected?

I'm already an undead, so the gradual necrosis doesn't apply... No, wearing that golden mask for too long means real death once removed, resulting in instant death... Lumian found no exploitable loophole and sighed in disappointment.

He continued reading the last part of the letter: “Winter is Coming: This revolver was found at the site of a secret but failed ritual while investigating the Order of All Extinction cult. It was meant to be a collectible firearm, but it became a formidable weapon with a limited number of uses due to corruption during the ritual.

"The bullets it fires carry that corruption, producing two effects: “One ensures the bullet hits its target; even Saints, unless they use special abilities to dodge, will be hit. For beings below demigods, unless they switch with a substitute or the shooter is under an illusion and unable to aim, the shot will hit its intended target, and any substitutes will fail.

"Two, ensures death; even Saints, lacking certain traits and abilities, once hit, will suffer great trauma and gradually die. For beings below demigods, a hit means certain death.

"These two effects cannot coexist; a choice is made for each shot.

“The number of times it can still carry these effects is four. Once used up, Winter is Coming will revert to a normal revolver and begin rusting and deteriorating. However, until then, its normal shots will also spread ailments with each wound, with the type of disease being unpredictable.

“After each use of Winter is Coming, you must seek treatment from an Apothecary or Doctor within the following week, even if no symptoms appear.

"If not treated in time, you will inevitably contract a terminal illness that lower-sequence Apothecaries and Doctors cannot cure due to mystical factors.”

This is a weapon that can harm demigods...? After the Overseer Perle's painted self incident, are Miss Magician and her peers consciously providing us with items that can affect demigods, with bearable side effects? Doctor... Lumian half-turned his body, casting his gaze toward the door.

Lugano had already woken up and was preparing Ludwig's first breakfast.

After confirming the rewards, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and pulled out the brownish sheepskin parchment, written on in dark red ink:

“Potion name: Iron-blooded Knight; "Sequence: 4;

"Main ingredient: Magma Giant's core, Stone of Catastrophe; “Supplementary ingredients: 80 milliliters of boiling magma, 20 grams of flora powder corrupted by a Stone of Catastrophe, 20 grams of soil soaked in soldier's blood from a large battlefield, one acorn; “Ritual: Form a team of at least 30 people, cultivate deep comradeship with them, allowing them to grow stronger together with perfect

synergy, understanding the leader's intent through eye contact and gestures, nearly as one entity, then have them perform the ritual (the stronger and more cohesive the team, the better the ritual's effect)."

While reading, Lumian felt a strong burning sensation from the dark red inked words and thought he could smell rust and blood.

Phew... Lumian had just finished reading the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula and quickly set it down on the table, feeling as if he was sinking into a hell of flames and blood.

Such a strong mental impact...

Is it because the Sequence 4 potion formula inherently possesses such traits, or because it was written by an Angel, or perhaps a combination of both?

Boiling magma... Does this mean drinking magma directly, and if you don't advance, you die?

Lumian memorized the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula in his mind, occasionally opening the parchment to ensure there were no mistakes.

…

In the morning, at 702 Apartment, 9 Rue Orosai.

Lumian placed the new Traveler's Bag and the two weapons on the coffee table and went into detail about the latter two.

“Only three items?" Franca asked, puzzled.

Lumian chuckled.

"There's also the Iron-blooded Knight Sequence 4 potion formula for the Hunter pathway, but that's meaningless for you."

“Who says so? At Sequence 4, a Demoness can switch to the Hunter pathway!" Franca retorted, her eyes sparkling.

She almost said that before joining the Demoness Sect, her dream was to obtain the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula to turn herself back into a male.

Before Lumian could respond, Franca eagerly pleaded, "May I see it? It's not like you'll lose anything" This way, if I become a Demoness of Affliction and something forces me out of the Demoness Sect, I could consider advancing to Iron-blooded Knight!

“Sure.” Lumian replied nonchalantly.

He knew what Franca truly desired.

He then took the brownish parchment out of his Traveler's Bag.

Seeing this, Jenna asked, curious yet hopeful, "May I have a look too?"

This was a potion formula that could unlock the gates of godhood!

"Uh..." Franca turned to Jenna, wanting to stop her but finding no suitable excuse.

Is it really appropriate for a female Demoness to look at the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula?

Lumian didn't help Franca dissuade Jenna, and freely unfolded the brown parchment, placing it on the coffee table surface, and casually cautioned, “For every paragraph, take a look then close your eyes and rest for a few seconds—it has a strong mental impact."

After a while, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony felt as though they had been roasted by a fire all night long, their sweat long since dried.

"It requires at least thirty people... That's a bit difficult," Franca said, empathizing with Lumian's challenge.

Lumian chuckled.

The stronger the team members, the better the effect. And if you have members with godhood in the team, the number required can be significantly reduced."

Franca and Jenna thought of a name simultaneously and said in unison, "Ludwig?"

“I'm trying to teach him." Lumian gave a godfatherly smile.

Franca said no more and turned her attention to the three items: the Wintry Blade, Winter is Coming, and the Traveler's Bag.

She generously smiled and said, "Jenna, Anthony, you pick first. Just don't leave the Traveler's Bag for me—I already have one."

She was worried about lacking a powerful or special effect item. Both the Wintry Blade and Winter is Coming perfectly met her needs—any would do. As an Assassin, her hidden blade was a normal weapon that could rely on Witch powers to attach black flames, while the Cannon Gun was akin to a portable mini-cannon, nothing special.

Anthony immediately looked at Jenna, signaling her to choose first.

This was not out of courtesy—he wanted the Traveler's Bag, and he wanted the other two items as well.

Jenna looked at the Hypnotist, lacking direct attack capability, then at Franca, whose gaze moved back and forth between the Wintry Blade and Winter is

Coming. She picked up the ark coin pouch and said with a smile, “I‘ve always wanted a Traveler's Bag."

This wasn't a lie—many Witch spells required casting materials, and some items, even just by carrying them, could have negative effects, which could be barely avoided by placing them in the Traveler's Bag, such as the Beyonder characteristic of the Dream Stealer.

Once Jenna took the Traveler's Bag, Anthony quickly made his decision.

“I’ll take Winter is Coming.”

Without a Traveler's Bag, carrying the Wintry Blade would be a significant burden.

Franca looked at the nearly transparent triangular spike and smiled broadly.

“I’ll see if I can have it made into a hidden blade."

These are all suitable rewards for us. Madam Judgment and company are so thoughtful...

Lumian watched his companions distribute the rewards, nodding thoughtfully.

That evening, back in the rented apartment, he met Madam Magician again.

This Major Arcana card holder spoke bluntly, “Head to the Blue Avenger now."

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Chapter 743 Exploration

□743 Exploration

On the dark expanse of the sea, the antiquated Blue Avenger bobbed gently with the undulations of the waves, enveloped by an unending mist.

Lumian once again came face to face with Alger, the Stormbringer.

The bearer of The Hanged Man card stood on deck, his deep blue hair a wild mess, seemingly under constant assault from the sea winds. His attire had changed from his previous sailor's garb to a captain's coat adorned with golden embroidery on a blue background.

"Explore it yourself," Alger said to Lumian, who was standing beside Magician, nodding firmly.

"I don't have any wisdom to impart that would help; if I did, I'd have already uncovered all the secrets of this ghost ship."

These matters had been confirmed by Madam Magician, leaving Lumian without doubts. He

thanked Alger and began walking forward, his steps echoing on the wooden deck.

He triggered the residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right palm without hesitation, but felt no ominous sensation spill forth.

Instead, his palm felt ice-cold, while deep within was a pain like fire scorching his flesh.

Lumian lifted his right hand and noticed that the faint red scar had brightened slightly, but the skin covering it had turned paler, more deathlike.

I wonder whether the Underworld Daoist's seal would prevent activating the key special characteristics of this ghost ship... Lumian circled the Blue Avenger's cabin with a mix of anxiety and trepidation.

During his exploration, he encountered no attacks from ropes or any other disturbances.

It seems the residual aura of the Blood Emperor still serves some purpose, or else it wouldn't be this tranquil... Lumian muttered to himself as he stepped into the cabin, exploring each room in turn.

The Hanged Man, Alger, did not follow but stayed at the front of the deck, watching from afar.

As Lumian's figure disappeared deeper into the ship, Magician raised her right hand and drew a circle in mid-air with her index finger.

A sprinkle of brilliant starlight emerged, initially forming a transparent crystal orb, then expanding into a circular, dreamlike veil.

On the veil, Lumian's figure appeared, wandering around the captain's cabin, occasionally extending his right palm to touch various objects.

"There should be some findings," Magician stated with a charlatan-like tone.

The Hanged Man nodded slightly, not asking what might be found or what changes it could bring, since even Magician could not divine a certain future, and Ma'am Hermit could only see vague images.

After Mr. Fool's slumber, the Major Arcana card holders had explored the Blue Avenger multiple times but had not unraveled the ghost ship's core secrets or located the treasures left by the Tudor dynasty.

With the Apprentice pathway's speciality, Magician only managed to help The Hanged Man uncover other secrets, unable to reach the deepest level.

Mr. Star's explanation was:

"The Blue Avenger is not only influenced by the Lawyer pathway's Distortion authority but also possesses notable traits of errors, spatial transposition, and grafting.

And this aligned with the actual circumstances of the Tudor dynasty: Under Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, among the five great nobles, Amon was the Marauder, the King of Angels of the Error pathway, later becoming a true god; the ancestor of the Abraham family, Mr. Door, was the King of Angels of the Apprentice pathway; and the ancestor of the Antigonus family was the King of Angels of the Seer pathway. The Jacob and Tamara families had one Angel from the Error pathway and one who had been an Angel of the Apprentice pathway.

They clearly possessed strong abilities to utilize errors, alter positions, and graft spaces.

If not ensuring the preservation of the Blue Avenger and its treasures unharmed and intact, Magician felt she could unravel the ghost ship's deepest secrets, but doing so would reduce the Blue Avenger to irreparable fragments.

Under the watchful eyes of two Major Arcana card holders, Lumian searched every room on the upper deck without triggering any anomalies.

He intermittently came across seven or eight sailors, all instructed by the captain not to interfere with his exploration.

Approaching the stairs leading to the lower decks, Lumian glanced down into the pitch-black abyss below, maintaining the stimulated aura of the Blood Emperor as he descended the creaking stairs.

As he walked, he suddenly detected an unusual scent.

He had been descending for thirty to forty seconds, which under normal circumstances should have brought him to the lower deck's floor.

The distance between the Blue Avenger's upper and lower decks couldn't possibly be so vast that a Reaper couldn't traverse it in dozens of seconds!

To this, Lumian responded not with alarm, but with elation.

An anomaly was exactly what he needed!

Had there been no anomaly, it would have meant the sealed residual aura of the Blood Emperor could no longer function properly!

Lumian exhaled, calming his nerves while maintaining a steady but unhurried pace, continuing the creaky descent into the darkness.

After an indeterminate amount of time, he saw no more wooden steps ahead; his feet now touched cold, black stone slabs radiating a metallic chill.

Have I arrived? Just as this thought flickered through Lumian's mind, his vision was flooded with blazing white light.

He saw a barrage of white-hot flame spears flying densely toward him, obscuring everything above.

It was like facing an army, each soldier hurling a flame spear from their hands.

There was nowhere to hide, no way to dodge.

Instinctively, Lumian was about to swap places with his shadow, hoping to use this rapid ability to survive the initial volley and then seek a chance to teleport away.

But just then, he had an idea—an extremely daring idea.

Lumian's expression took on a tinge of madness as he faced the overwhelming barrage of flame spears, not using any abilities and not even attempting to dodge.

He straightened his back and thrust forward his right palm.

The right palm, sealed by the Underworld Daoist and carrying the residual aura of the Blood Emperor—both were fully activated.

The dense, rain-like barrage of white-hot flame spears instantly froze in mid-air.

They stopped, neither advancing nor falling.

Seeing this, Lumian let out an uncontrollable sigh of relief.

He had made the right bet!

Gradually, the white-hot flame spears began to extinguish, slowly fading until they completely disappeared.

Before Lumian could take a closer look, clusters of bright flames lit up on both sides.

They resembled wall-mounted lamps, piercing the dense darkness and revealing the surroundings.

He found himself in a deep, wide hall that was smaller than he had imagined.

When the white-hot flame spears were hurled at him like a flock of endless crows, it felt as though he stood on an ancient battlefield, vast enough to be measured in kilometers. However, the hall before him was merely the size of the grand prayer hall of the Saint Vive Cathedral.

At a glance, Lumian's gaze froze, and his heart seemed to stop beating.

At the far end of the hall, there stood a colossal throne made of black iron.

The surface of the throne bore patches of red, either from the corrosion of ages or from old bloodstains.

There was a figure on the throne!

This figure was giant-like, draped in a deep red ceremonial robe and wearing an iron-black crown, with its right elbow resting on the armrest, supporting its bowed head.

The flickering blood-red long hair draped down, hiding the figure's face.

Lumian was familiar with this figure; he had seen it at the Samaritan Women's Spring, though the attire was somewhat different now.

It was the figure of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor!

However, this figure lacked the terror, violence, and madness seen at the Samaritan Women's Spring, devoid of the aura of war and destruction, and the tangible oppressiveness and sense of conquest; if it weren't visible, Lumian would have believed there was nothing on the iron throne.

A phantom? Lumian closed his eyes, relying solely on his other senses and intuition to feel.

In this perception, there was nothing above the iron throne marked with red stains.

Lumian's heartbeat gradually normalized, and he reopened his eyes to look at the iron throne.

The figure remained motionless.

Lumian resisted the urge to observe any weaknesses in the figure or to activate the Eye of Calamity. Instead, he shifted his gaze and surveyed the rest of the hall.

Below the nine steps leading up to the iron throne were five mottled stone chairs —two on the left and three on the right.

Why couldn't there be one more, for symmetry? Lumian couldn't help but criticize to himself.

He knew these five stone chairs likely represented the five great nobles of the Tudor dynasty.

These ancient, mottled chairs appeared smashed by someone; some were completely split by cracks, some shattered into countless pieces yet barely holding their original shape, some had broken backrests, some were missing their seats, and others seemed melted by intense flames as if burnt for a long time.

Had there been a battle here? Lumian tried to find corresponding marks on the black stone floor, the giant supporting columns, and the surrounding walls, but found nothing.

No objects either... Weren't there supposed to be treasures from the Tudor dynasty hidden here? Had they been stolen? Hmm, Termiboros had said earlier that if I'm not of high enough level, forcibly exploring the Blue Avenger could lead to the resurrection of Alista Tudor within me... This suggests there should be something here, or some arrangement... Lumian started walking forward again.

All the while, he kept his eyes on the figure on the iron throne, observing every detail.

Suddenly, he saw a pair of eyes, iron-black and cold.

The figure on the iron throne slowly raised its head.

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Chapter 744 Approach

744 Approach

The moment Lumian saw those iron-black eyes, his mind went completely blank.

When he came to, he was shocked to find himself walking step by step toward the massive iron throne without any intention to do so.

He could feel his body trembling uncontrollably, yet he was powerless to stop his legs from moving.

It seemed as though his body was no longer his own, obeying unknown commands and directed by someone else!

This scene, coupled with the figure on the iron throne possibly being Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, instantly reminded Lumian of two past incidents: One was at the Samaritan Women's Spring, where both he and Hela lost consciousness due to the violent reactions of the Blood Emperor's apparition, walking back to the edge of the spring as if they were puppets being manipulated or soldiers absolutely obeying orders.

The other was in the depths of the Red Swan Castle's underground labyrinth, where he, Albus, and Elros lost consciousness after hearing a phantom roar from Vermonda Sauron in Fourth Epoch Trier, and they all wandered away from the core area, each towards a different wax sculptors.

Could this be a similar situation now? Is this a capability at the Hunter's angelic level? Lumian forced himself to calm down to find a way out of his current predicament.

Compared to those two times, at least his consciousness recovered quickly this time!

Right, why did my consciousness awaken first this time, while my body still accepts control?

Is the figure of Alista Tudor here weaker and less powerful, or is there another reason?

Perhaps this anomaly holds the key to overcoming the control.

Lumian strained to extend his will towards his limbs, trying to regain control over them.

This had some effect; his steps toward the iron throne began to slow.

He also took the opportunity to get a clearer look at the figure of Alista Tudor on the throne: The Blood Emperor had a stern face with sharp, chiseled features, resolute lips, a prominent nose, and long hair gleaming with a faint blood-light, his iron-black eyes cold yet filled with ultimate madness.

Suddenly, Lumian felt an urge to submit, to give up resistance.

This impulse did not fade quickly but instead swelled rapidly, filling his mind.

No, I can't resist...

There's no way to resist...

Submit, submission will grant everything…

If He becomes angry, I will be destroyed, and Franca and Jenna will also be destroyed…

Give up, give up, kneel down and beg for forgiveness, accept the command...

Such thoughts surged in Lumian's mind, turning into violent waves that battered his clarity, rationality, and will.

He clenched his teeth, as if any relaxation would break the final dam, and the food would completely drown his will and soul.

His previously slowed steps quickened again.

On the deck of the Blue Avenger.

Magician and The Hanged Man were both staring at the dreamlike veil suspended in midair.

Against a backdrop of starlight, Lumian's figure on the translucent curtain had already become blurred, the surrounding darkness rendering everything else invisible.

This obscurity compared to the previous clarity indicated that something unusual was happening.

The eyes of Magician and The Hanged Man saw Lumian's body growing increasingly rigid, yet his pace quickening.

They also noticed his black hair slowly lengthening, tinted with a blood-like glow.

"Something's off," The Hanged Man Alger, said, turning to Madam Magician beside him.

Magician nodded slightly, preparing to pull out a Sealed Artifact.

This would help her precisely locate Lumian and allow her direct entry into the hidden extradimensional space.

In the dim surroundings, Lumian walked forward with a blank, rigid expression.

Yet his soul was struggling, crying out in pain:

I can't give up...

J mustn't give up...

If1 lose my resolve, I will no longer be myself...

Dogsh*t...

Son of a sow...

…

Lumian exerted all his strength, but felt an increasing desire to submit.

Suddenly, the dam holding his will collapsed, and surrender and submission completely overtook him.

Lumian's mind went blank again.

In this state, he had no concept of how much time had passed, until a deathly cold and rot-like pain shot through his right palm.

Death... cold...

Rot... pain...

Pain...

Lumian was jolted awake, suddenly regaining his thoughts and a measure of control over his body.

Before him was not the nine-stepped dais or the huge iron throne marked with red, but a mirror.

An antique full-length mirror, framed with elaborate silver designs!

The mirror reflected Lumian's figure.

In the mirror, Lumian saw his face contorted with pain, looking like he might give up at any moment, while his facial contours slowly sharpened and his nose became unnaturally prominent.

At the same time, his black hair grew inch by inch, dyed with a bloody glow, and his blue eyes turned colder, edging toward iron-black.

Jam turning into Alista Tudor...

This realization dawned on Lumian.

Without thinking further, while his body still somewhat obeyed his commands, he immediately lunged to the side, trying to escape the reflection of the silver mirror.

A dive followed by a roll quickly took him out of the mirror's reflective range.

The next second, he heard a phantom roar, a mad scream.

His mind blanked out again.

As his thoughts gradually returned, he found himself still crouched on the ground, the endpoint of his roll.

His body hadn't moved toward the mirror on its own, but it couldn't stop shaking, as if his blood had frozen.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It seemed as if something inside the mirror was madly pounding, making the mirror clatter as if it were about to shatter and release a monster.

And with each bang against the mirror, Lumian's mind felt the impact, over and over.

This gripped him with fear, nearly solidifying his thoughts.

After a while, the pounding inside the mirror gradually subsided, and the surroundings became eerily quiet.

Lumian's body stopped shaking, and he began to understand and reflect on his current situation and recent ordeal: If had really approached that full-length mirror, and the reflection had completed the transformation, would that mean that Blood Emperor Alista Tudor would be resurrected within me?

But as long as I'm not reflected in that mirror, and my image isn't cast upon it, the impact will be minimal, and neither my will nor my body will lose command...

Is the trigger for this transformation entering the range of the full-length mirror's reflection?

It seems calm now...

Lumian slowly supported himself up, cautiously observing his surroundings.

He realized he was not in a somber hall, but in a bizarre starlight-formed space where the floor appeared semi-transparent, revealing endless darkness below, and no dome above, only twinkling yet ethereal stars.

On either side were doors of starlight, erect in the darkness, forming a wide, somber corridor that ended with the silver full-body mirror.

At this moment, Lumian had reached deep into this corridor, only about fifteen meters from the mirror.

Was the hall I saw earlier, the stone chair, the iron throne, and the figure of the Blood Emperor all illusions?

Was their purpose to make me submit?

No, if I had been reflected in the mirror, the one emitting the roar I just heard would have achieved their goal...

In a flash of insight, Lumian guessed: Perhaps, the illusions I saw earlier—the iron throne, the figure of Tudor, the broken stone chair— were resonances caused by the residual aura of the Blood Emperor within me and that silver full-length mirror, which also triggered a response trom the Underworld Daoist's brand, helping me briefly escape the controlled state and the mirror's reflective range.

Thinking this, Lumian raised his right hand, looking at his palm.

There, the pale red scar was vibrant as if just entered into his body, while the pale skin around it showed clear signs of decay, leaking a pale yellow fluid, and revealing the bones beneath.

This preliminary confirmed Lumian's suspicion.

He once again turned his gaze toward the silver full-length mirror facing him.

Having dealt with the Mirror People multiple times, he slightly furrowed his brows: Does the Blood Emperor want to use that mirror and His residual aura within me for resurrection?

There must be something hidden inside that mirror.

The Blood Emperor's s resurrection setup actually involves the mirror world...

Yeah, that’s not unusual, whether it's the special mirror world itself or the Mirror People from that world, they are all related to this Blood Emperor's Fourth Epoch Trier...

I had thought the special mirror world was a relic of the War of the Four Emperors, but Moran Avigny from the Tamara family said their connection to the special mirror world was established before the War of the Four Emperors...

Dammit, that special mirror world couldn't have been created by the Blood Emperor, could it?

How many problems has He left for this world?

As expected of the Blood Emperor known for His madness…

But clearly, the special mirror world can't avoid the Primordial Demoness...

Could it be that the Demoness Sect secretly lured the Tamara family, trying to subtly influence the Blood Emperor through the special mirror world?

In the end, it was used by the Blood Emperor?

Fourth Epoch Trier is indeed full of mysteries...

As Lumian pondered, he suddenly understood why Termiboros had initially prevented him from exploring the Blue Avenger.

To explore here, one would need either the Underworld Daoist's brand to seal the Blood Emperor's residual essence or some corresponding artifact or authority to counteract that domination; otherwise, one would become a puppet of Alista Tudor, allowing Him to resurrect within.

For Termiboros, this was definitely not a good thing.

Lumian's gaze shifted, focusing on the doors of starlight.

Did they represent different treasures?

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Chapter 745 Three Items

□745 Three Items

Having checked his physical condition, Lumian slowly moved along the wall of the spacious corridor.

During this, he almost cleared his mind, not thinking or analyzing, focusing solely on whether he would be caught by the silver full-length mirror at the end of the deep corridor.

Finally, following his instincts, Lumian stopped.

He hoped to use the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence and a Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate to find the most "suitable" room among the doors of starlight.

There might be high-level items from the Hunter's path there, even the main ingredient for the lron-blooded Knight potion!

Looking at the translucent door formed by brilliant starlight beside him, Lumian, in a hushed tone, asked, "Termiboros, do you think there's great danger inside?"

After the ordeal with the School of Truth, Lumian grew more cautious and vigilant towards the Angel of Inevitability, but that didn't mean he wouldn't seek His opinion under the right circumstances and conditions, as Termiboros could still offer valuable advice.

As it was now, with Madam Magician outside, Termiboros had little hope of breaking His seal; his death or mutation would only worsen His situation, likely prompting Him to warn of any danger.

Lumian couldn't see changes in his own fate, but Termiboros could!

Termiboros remained silent, not answering Lumian's question.

Unfazed, Lumian placed his right hand, still pulsing with the Blood Emperor's residual essence, on the handle of the starlight door before him.

He slowly turned the handle, poised to push the door open, waiting for any reaction from Termiboros.

The door of starlight gradually opened, and Termiboros gave no warning.

No response is also a response! It means the danger inside is bearable, or likely manageable...

Lumian calmly pushed the door wide open and walked into the room dominated by shadows.

Suddenly, a bluish-white blaze lit up, and an iron-black sword engulfed in terrifying flames struck down towards his head.

Prepared for such surprises, Lumian quickly activated the black mark on his shoulder and teleported to the side of the room.

Bang!

The black sword, covered in bluish-white flames, struck the translucent starlight floor, leaving a deep crack.

Inside the crack, some of the starlight melted, appearing like flowing magma.

Using the sparks, Lumian saw who his assailant was.

It was a nearly 2.5-meter tall suit of iron-black armor, the interior of its visor a swath of darkness, as if uninhabited, with no fiery glow of an undead's eyes.

With a swift motion, the iron-black armor turned and faced Lumian, raising the large sword covered in bluish-white flames once more.

Before it could strike, Lumian’s blue eyes had turned iron-black.

He spotted the weak points in the half-giant armor, the pale-white spots at its joints.

As the black sword struck with its fiery blade, Lumian teleported away again.

With a bang, the bluish-white flames scattered, and Lumian’s figure outlined behind the iron-black armor.

He leaped up, his right fist igniting with white flames.

A resounding clang echoed as Lumian punched the joint between the helmet and body armor of the iron-black armor.

Cull!

After landing the punch, Lumian immediately teleported away, dodging a waist-high slash from the half-turned iron-black armor.

In this manner, using the high mobility of teleport, he continuously appeared behind his target, striking the same spot with Cull, never overreaching, completing a single hit with each teleport.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

After five consecutive Culls, the iron-black armor stood frozen in place.

Gnarly cracks spread rapidly from the joint between its helmet and body armor, soon covering its entire body.

Crack!

The iron-black armor completely shattered, its metal fragments falling like rain onto the starlight-condensed floor, making a pattering sound.

Clang. The large sword covered in bluish-white flames followed, hitting the ground.

It has no intelligence, moves stiffly, and is stronger than a Sequence 6 but weaker than a Sequence 5. However, that sword hits incredibly hard. If it struck me, unless I substituted with an animated shadow, I would've been killed instantly or lost limbs. That's only because it didn't hit my torso. And yes, it's very durable, even more so than the Guardians I encountered at the Dream Festival, Lumian mused, glancing at the shattered armor while using the remaining light from the black sword to scan the room for other dangers.

The room was quite empty, featuring only an altar-like stone platform with a small, transparent glass bottle on it, containing a semi-solid yellowish-red substance, topped with a thick black wick.

A mystical candle? Lumian speculated roughly. I wonder what it's used for...

By now, he was fairly certain there were no other surprises, and he turned his attention back to the pile of fragments from the shattered iron-black armor.

Among the debris, he found a peculiar piece of leather.

The leather was about the size of half a towel, creamy white, and finely textured, appearing so enticing that even from a distance, Lumian felt it must have belonged to a beautiful woman.

Human skin? he muttered, frowning as he approached.

He didn't immediately pick up the black sword, whose flames had mostly died down, or the alluring piece of leather. Instead, he drew a dagger from his Traveler's Bag.

Using the dagger, Lumian picked out the leather, holding it up before him.

The first thing he saw was a few words in ancient Hermes script:

“Despair…

"Sequence 4..."

Suddenly, Lumian's breathing grew belabored, his head spun, and his physical condition visibly worsened.

He quickly looked away and used the dagger to lift the delicate white leather, stuffing it into his Traveler's Bag.

His discomfort gradually subsided.

A potion formula for the Demoness of Despair? Lumian mused over what he had just seen.

And the leather it's written on was peeled right off a Demoness of Despair, hence its special and dangerous nature? Truly a relic from the Tudor dynasty, harboring such items...

Lost in thought, Lumian’s gaze shifted to the black sword, whose bluish-white flame was dimming, no longer as brilliant as before.

He pondered for a moment, deciding not to risk determining the item's abilities, effects, and negative impacts just yet. Instead, he placed it into the Traveler's Bag, setting it aside in a corner clear of other items.

Using the same method, Lumian also packed the strange candle in the glass bottle into the Traveler's Bag.

He planned to consult Madam Magician about these items once outside, rather than experimenting on his own!

After ensuring the room had nothing else of interest, Lumian returned through the door of starlight to the deep, spacious corridor.

Just as he was about to continue using the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence and a Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate to choose the next room to explore, a faint, distant voice suddenly echoed in his ears: “For you, the other rooms are too dangerous..."

This was the voice of Madam Magician.

Mr. Hanged Man and her are indeed watching... Did her words mean that the exploration is to pause here? This confirmation steadied Lumian considerably.

He thought for a few seconds, deciding to do one more thing before leaving this extradimensional space.

Slowly, bit by bit, he circled towards the silver full-length mirror at the end of the corridor, his focus intense, ready to turn and leave at the first word of discouragement from Madam Magician.

Until he reached the side of the silver full-length mirror, Madam Magician had not spoken out to stop him.

Lumian took a deep breath and carefully moved his right palm towards the front of the silver full-length mirror.

He didn't know whether the mirror would react again when reflecting only a palm.

As his palm moved slowly, Lumian’s nerves were taut.

Finally, he touched the surface of the mirror, feeling its brittle yet firm coldness.

Immediately after, Lumian activated a power from his contract with Bloody Jack —Mirror Markl He wanted to test whether he could still sense the mark left in this hidden space once he returned to the outside world.

Blood seeped from his palm into the mirror, forming an inverted image.

While waiting, Lumian suddenly had a thought: Did my recent encounters stack on negative effects from the Mirror Mark contract? This does indeed pertain to mirror-related anomalies and bizarre dangers...

In the blink of an eye, Lumian had set the Mirror Mark.

Having done this, he began to retrace his steps, avoiding areas where the silver full-length mirror could reflect him, and walked up the wooden stairs.

Before long, Lumian's path brightened as he saw the wall lamps on either side of the ship's cabin and the dim firelight.

He had returned to the Blue Avenger.

Upon reaching the front deck, before Lumian could ask Madam Magician to retrieve the three items from his Traveler's Bag and perform their appraisal, he heard the Major Arcana card holder chuckle and say, "As expected of a Hunter with the status of a fake Angel and Tudor's remnant aura. You obtained three items closely related to Hunters and Demonesses in an instant.

“That sword is what you were hoping for—it's made from the Iron-blooded Knight Beyonder characteristic.”

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Chapter 746 Corpse Wax Candle

746 Corpse Wax Candle

A mystical item made from an Iron-blooded Knight Beyonder characteristic? The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence sure is handy... A Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate must have contributed a bit... Or, could it be the result of some arrangement? Lumian was first surprised, then felt the aftereffects of a traumatic bestowment.

Madam Magician seemed to sense his thoughts and chuckled, saying, “I don't know if this is a bestowment from fate, but even if it is, it's the kind we were hoping for and can certainly accept.”

Lumian silently nodded.

Mr. Hanged Man, speaking calmly, said, "Don't overcomplicate your thoughts, just consider two things: “First, you now have no ability to escape this arrangement. Sometimes, what you think of as resistance or rebellion might actually be a predetermined part of the process, and Mr. Fool's Angels aren't always available to protect you. Remember, accepting reality isn't a sign of weakness; finding opportunities within such realities is a true act of courage.

“Second, maximize the benefits that this bestowment of fate brings. Work hard to improve yourself. This doesn't mean giving up but rather tests your wisdom and determination.

When you sense danger or anything unusual, remember, we will always stand by you.

Remember, Mr. Fool can interfere with those plans, but as you know, He isn't fully awake and can't frequently provide protection—only at critical moments.”

After listening intently, Lumian slowly nodded, finding a different kind of resonance and persuasiveness in hearing these ideas voiced by someone else.

Mr. Hanged Man thought for a moment, then added, "What you need to be most wary of is the attempt to resurrect the Blood Emperor through you. You must be extra cautious in similar situations going forward.”

"I'll remember that, thank you, Mr. Hanged Man," Lumian replied sincerely.

Madam Magician then steered the conversation back on track.

“You can take out the items you've gathered, and I'll help you evaluate their powers and any negative effects.”

With the promise of support, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and grasped the hilt of the dark, iron-black broadsword.

Suddenly, his inner worries, like clouds in the sky, were scattered by a terrifying wind, vanishing in an instant.

Why fear a bestowment from fate?

Why fear the arrangements of the gods?

To hell with them all!

May they all go to hell!

In that moment, Lumian was filled with courage, feeling as though he could swing his broadsword at the True Creator Himself if He appeared before him right then.

He drew the black broadsword, its flames extinguished yet still radiating intense heat, and handed it to Madam Magician.

Madam Magician looked at him, took the sword, and joked, "How about we call it the ‘Sword of Courage’?"

“The Sword of Courage..." Lumian paused for a moment.

As the black broadsword left his grasp and was taken by Madam Magician, he shivered violently.

What was I thinking?

I nearly blasphemed His sacred name...

How could I believe I was capable of deicide?

In a moment of fright, Lumian's eyes returned to the black broadsword in Madam Magician's hands.

Could it be its negative influence?

Could it really inspire the courage to commit deicide?

Stars sparkled in Madam Magician's eyes as she gazed at the sword and explained, "This sword fills its bearer with courage, ensuring they are not knocked down by fear or paralyzed by fright. If you had held this sword earlier, even if you were ultimately ‘conquered, you could have endured a bit longer.

“It's extremely durable and sharp, capable of blocking direct attacks from demigods and significantly impacting their defenses. It can also enable you to perform Cull at the level of an lron-blooded Knight, but this will consume a great deal of your spirituality, roughly two-thirds of it in one go.

“The sword can also absorb half of the damage for you. That is, even if you fail to block an attack and suffer a fatal wound, it can reduce the severity of that wound from fatal to grave.

“Each strike carries high-temperature flames, and depending on your will, these flames can spread from your weapon to your enemy's body upon contact, and each strike can cause massive explosion.

"If the sword is coated with your target's blood or if they've been scorched by its flames, you can throw it up to five kilometers into the sky. It will wrap itself in flames, fly toward the target like a live artillery shell, lock on, and then crash down, creating a violent explosion that can destroy everything in a typical public square.

“The maximum range is five kilometers, and it won't return to you on its own; you'll need to retrieve it.

"There are two drawbacks. First, excessive courage is a lethal poison. Human fear and apprehension are among the key reasons humans have survived to this era. A person who only knows courage and not fear will likely lose their ability to judge and analyze, leading to a swift demise.

"Second, it needs companions. You'll need to prepare at least thirty ordinary broadswords to place around it to complete the sealing process. Otherwise, within about fifteen minutes, it will start attacking everyone nearby indiscriminately, including you. Don't think about using the residual aura of the Blood Emperor to avoid or deter this, as this sword doesn't have living characteristics; it's a manifestation of its destructive godhood.

"It also constantly emits high temperatures, causing ordinary broadswords around it to gradually melt. So, you'll need to regularly replace its companions. Similarly, for you as the Reaper, it means enduring a progressively intensifying burn injury.

"That's about it. If you don't mind, we can call it the ‘Sword of Courage.”

Lumian nodded and replied, "Can the negative effects of being filled with courage be avoided if it's carried in the Traveler's Bag?"

"Yes," Madam Magician nodded gently.

Lumian pondered further and asked, "In the room where I found this sword, there was only one piece of armor, an altar, and two other items. Why didn't it destroy those things?"

"That suit of armor is its companion,” Madam Magician replied promptly.

Lumian did not inquire further and began to consider how to use the Sword of Courage: / must fully assess the situation and make the right judgment before drawing the sword...

This isn't a commander's scepter; it's a bugle for the charge...

/ts use must not exceed fifteen minutes...

While thinking, Lumian reached out and took hold of the Sword of Courage.

In the next second, he felt he didn't need to overthink: Fear of this, fear of that—all of that only leads to failure!

One should not be overly cautious or indecisive, just do it!

What is there to fear?

Madam Magician reached into the void and, from nowhere, produced dozens of broadswords with slight variations in design, letting them fly towards Lumian.

After placing the Sword of Courage among these broadswords and stuffing it back into the Traveler's Bag, Lumian snapped back to his senses.

He couldn't help but silently scoff at himself.

An Ascetic's abilities don't work in this case...

Then, he took out a piece of pristine, fine leather and a half-solid, pale yellowish-red candle housed in a transparent glass vial.

Stars again twinkled in Madam Magician's eyes as she took the two items and examined them for several seconds.

“This is indeed the potion formula of the Demoness of Despair, but the human skin carrying it comes from an ancient Demoness of Despair and contains strong, mystically powerful viruses, bacteria, and fungi. It causes those who touch or gaze upon it to gradually contract various diseases. If contact and observation don't exceed ten seconds, recovery will occur on its own,” Madam Magician briefly explained about the pristine leather.

Her gaze then shifted to the peculiar candle.

“This is a corpse wax candle, made from the corpse oils of an Iron-blooded Knight and a Demoness of Despair mixed with other substances.”

Corpse wax candle... And from two demigods' corpse oils... Although Lumian had seen much of the world, he still found the candle somewhat eerie and terrifying when he looked at it again.

“What is its use?" he asked, more concerned with this issue while feeling strangely uneasy.

Madam Magician deliberated before responding, "Once lit and used in pacts and Cogitation, it should probably be paired with a ritual, but the specific details and ultimate effect are unclear. Hmm, you have the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, maybe you can try it directly without a ritual.”

Lumian didn't hesitate. "Alright, I'll try it now."

With an Angel and Saint watching over him, if anything went wrong, they could save him.

Why wait to try it alone when he got back?

Neither Magician nor The Hanged Man stopped him.

Lumian took the corpse wax candle from the glass jar and sat cross-legged on the deck.

Snap-his fingers produced a blazing white flame, and he immediately lit the black wick of the corpse wax candle.

Then, he closed his eyes, visualized a pattern, and began to Cogitate.

In the tranquil state of dispersion, a hint of dark fragrance entered his nostrils, causing his marrow to itch as if it were about to ignite.

Lumian didn't try to endure this sensation; he simply concentrated on maintaining his cogitative state.

After some time, a dark mist suddenly appeared "before" his eyes.

He seemed to be standing in this mist, on the edge of a barely visible street.

Across the street, various not-too-tall buildings appeared as if they were mere shadows.

Ding-ding—a vehicle resembling a steam train came from the other end of the street. It had few segments, just two, with no distinctive chimney but a strangely shaped bracket extending from the top, connecting to something in midair.

Wh—Lumian's memory was instantly triggered.

He had seen a similar scene in Fourth Epoch Trier!

It heralded the appearance of the second level in that special mirror world.

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Chapter 747 Pact Experience

747 Pact Experience

Ding-ding.

The object resembling a steam train whizzed past Lumian, its presence nearly obscured by the thick, dark mist. Yet, Lumian managed to discern some details: both carriages were blue and seemed to be crammed with passengers standing and facing the street, their expressions blurred and their forms lacking clear outlines.

This is more than what I had witnessed in Fourth Epoch Trier—it isn't powered by steam. As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Lumian noticed someone at the other end of the street, hunched over, pulling a black, two-wheeled cart with a canopy.

A lady sitting in the cart, holding a round fan and dressed in a long skirt, was hidden by the thick mist, which obscured the finer details of her and the puller's attire.

Lumian found himself staring as the black cart approached.

At that moment, the lady in the cart lifted her fan to her face, turned slowly, and looked back at Lumian.

As if the mist had thinned, Lumian could see the back of the lady's hand holding the fan: swollen and shiny with dark, bluish patches.

The puller, with a towel around his neck, stopped, and the lady, who seemed about to step down from the peculiar cart, looked towards Lumian.

A wave of fear washed over him, instinctively repelling any contact with the lady.

Then, he heard a panicked whisper—it was his own voice, although he harbored no such thoughts!

Standing on the edge of the street, enveloped in the dark mist, Lumian felt a sharp tension as if his true self wasn't entirely present.

Lumian’s heart tightened as he attempted to step back.

He suddenly found himself floating up, soaring into midair.

He saw the core of the dense mist, a vast city with a bizarre, shadowy high tower beneath which lay unspeakable horrors and gloom.

Unwillingly, he flew towards it.

Almost at the same time, he saw specks of starlight appear.

Lumian abruptly exited his Cogitative state; the city and tower wrapped in the dark mist, the segmented train, and the lady with the floral fan vanished from his “vision.”

He opened his eyes to see Madam Magician and Mr. Hanged Man.

"You were a bit off just now, showing signs of losing control, so I had to wake you," Madam Magician briefly explained.

Lumian thanked her, extinguished the enticingly fragrant corpse wax candle, and detailed the scenes and characters he had witnessed during his meditation.

Madam Magician nodded thoughtfully and remarked, "It’s similar to a pact-making ritual.

"This has established a connection between you and some unknown entity, progressively aligning with it. However, unlike a true pact ritual that is directed towards deities, angels, demons, or evil spirits, your pact seems to be with a city.

“If I hadn't interrupted the process earlier, you might have accessed some higher knowledge or power through this pact experience, though it likely wouldn't have been somethingpositive."

Lumian, no novice in mysticism, understood the nature and implications of such rituals.

He pondered and then countered, "So, you're saying that the city in the fog, closely related to Fourth Epoch Trier and very special, has formed a connection with me through this corpse wax candle, despite the vast distances and the layers of seals between us?"

"Yes, it's not an illusion," Madam Magician replied, looking towards the candle encased in a small glass vial with a light yellow and red hue. “Besides the corpse oils of the lron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair, this candle likely contains some special materials to which its origins I'm not aware of. There are two other locations where it could be more effective, allowing you to see and experience more. But those are far too dangerous; you already showed signs of losing control, so I wouldn't recommend trying it now.”

“The other two locations..." Lumian's curiosity piqued. "Is one of them Fourth Epoch Trier?"

In Fourth Epoch Trier, he could already partially see that misty city. Lighting the candle and entering a Cogitative state would surely reveal much more sights and experiences!

"Yes," Madam Magician affirmed Lumian's guess.

“And where is the other place?" Lumian inquired further.

Unless the School of Truth’s vortex project could unlock Fourth Epoch Trier's seals, it would be a long time before he could re-enter that version of Trier.

Madam Magician eyed Lumian for a few seconds before simply stating, "Bansy.”

Bansy... Bansy Harbor? The harbor that had been destroyed by the Church of Storms due to some corruption, where no one had escaped? That was also the former home of Red Angel Medici... Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly.

Considering the Red Angel's gains in Fourth Epoch Trier and the pathways He took, Lumian had no doubts about the special nature of Bansy Harbor being akin to that of Fourth Epoch Trier.

“Of course, it must be a specific place in Bansy Harbor, not just anywhere,” Madam Magician added, then continued, "There's another place I'm not sure about for the candle's efficacy.”

“Which place?" Lumian asked, then had a sudden insight, "City of Exiles, Morora?"

“Correct, you're now clearly seeing the connections between things,” Madam Magician praised him, sternly advising, "If you do decide to venture to those places and use the corpse wax candle to aid your Cogitation and complete the pact, make sure someone is with you at all times to monitor your condition and wake you immediately if anything unusual occurs."

"I'll remember that," Lumian promised earnestly.

As Madam Magician gestured for Lumian to pack away the candle, she thought for a moment and said, "Use the Sword of Courage as a Sealed Artifact for now. When it's time to concoct the Iron-blooded Knight potion, I'll revert it into a Beyonder characteristic.

“By the way, the Sealed Artifact crafted by Hisoka’s Beyonder characteristics should be completed in a few days.”

“Thank you, Madam Magician," Lumian expressed his gratitude sincerely.

Although obtaining the lron-blooded Knight main ingredient so easily felt somewhat unreal, when he thought about how the Blood Emperor's residual aura came to be, which played a key role in it, and the issue of the Underworld Daoist's seal, he realized it wasn't that "easy" after all.

Lumian then discussed the remains of Omebella’s umbilical cord and Ludwig's three processing methods, finally asking, "Can I consume that piece of umbilical cord to gain some of the Great Mother's Child of God's bloodline?"

Madam Magician's expression turned slightly strange as she looked towards The Hanged Man Alger, seemingly seeking his opinion on the matter.

The Hanged Man looked at Lumian and asked seriously, "This will indeed bring you some opportunities, but with them, corresponding risks as well. We can help you, but we can't be there every moment. You need to consider whether you're willing to take this risk and if it's worth it."

Madam Magician added, "While the Great Mother's attention might sound nebulous and not tangible enough to have a real effect—after all, you're already under the scrutiny of the being known as Inevitability-having one more such entity's attention might not seem like a big deal. However, remember, the Great Mother's interference and permeation in our world far exceed those of the Inevitability entity. If you do consume Omebella's umbilical cord remnants, you might face unknown influences or attract special enemies without even realizing it.

“Of course, there's only a potential risk, not a certainty.”

What concerned Lumian more was another point.

“Madam Magician, Mr. Hanged Man, it seems you've already confirmed that consuming Omebella's umbilical cord will bring some opportunities?”

This must be a significantly useful opportunity; otherwise, Madam Magician's expression wouldn't have become strange, nor would she have consulted Mr. Hanged Man.

There's no need to hesitate on matters with only downsides; it's the presence of significantpotential benefits that causes Madam Magician to pause!

Madam Magician weighed her words carefully before responding, "The vortex project might involve a location tainted by the Great Mother's power, teeming with monsters spawned from this corruption. If you possess the bloodline of the Great Mother's Child of God, theoretically, you wouldn't need to worry about attacks from them, and you might even be able to command them simply.

“That's one aspect. Another is that once you meet two other prerequisite conditions, you should be able to touch and briefly use a Grade O Sealed Artifact.”

Grade 0 Sealed Artifact... Extremely Dangerous. Not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied; capable of destroying a country or even the whole world... Lumian's spirit lifted at the mention.

So far, he had indirectly encountered two Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts: 0-01 and 0-05.

“What's the number of that Grade O Sealed Artifact?” Lumian curiously asked. "Why would having the Great Mother's Child of God bloodline allow me to touch and briefly use it?"

Madam Magician glanced at Lumian and said, "I can't tell you the details yet. All I can say is, it's not the Child of God bloodline of the Great Mother that allows you to touch it, but rather the integration of Omebella’s umbilical cord remnants with you that helps you access it without facing severe danger, because it originated from Omebella’s remains.”

Omebella's remains... Omebella had remains before being born? No, that's normal, as there are already remnants of the umbilical cord before She was born... Ah, the one that shares the same name? No, obviously, it's more than just sharing names... Lumian pondered and then asked, "Are you referring to the remnants of the Goddess of Harvest from ancient times?"

times?"

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Chapter 748 Despair Ritual

748 Despair Ritual

Madam Magician confirmed Lumian’s guess, "Yes, the remains of Omebella, the Goddess of Harvest."

The remains of the Goddess of Harvest... a Grade O Sealed Artifact... contact should be possible and briefly usable... Lumian asked eagerly, "What are the other two prerequisites, besides merging with the remnants of Omebella’s umbilical cord?”

Magician laughed self-deprecatingly and said, "I really shouldn't have told you this; it's spurred you to truly consider taking risks.

“Of course, as a high-ranking Astromancer, I can't say I didn't foresee this. Telling you everything and letting you decide is my choice.

"The two prerequisites are: “First, you must have been betrayed by a direct relative; second, you must be female.”

Wh-—This clearly disappointed Lumian.

He felt he met the betrayal requirement, as his biological father had abandoned him and his mother, leading to his grandfather's bankruptcy. But why did he have to be a woman?

Madam Magician seemed to guess his thoughts.

"You barely meet the betrayal criterion. As for being female, in the world of mysticism, there are ways to temporarily transform you into a woman, such as a special mystical item from the Demoness pathway, which doesn't necessarily require a high Sequence.

“That's true..." Lumian thought of the Lie earring.

Although it couldn't change his gender, its ability to alter appearances or adjust height was equally magical.

If such items existed, then surely there must be artifacts that could change one's gender, which, given Lumian’s understanding of the Demoness path, he believed to be almost certainly existent, albeit rare and special.

Lumian's hope was rekindled about accessing Omebella's remains.

That was a Grade O Sealed Artifact!

Madam Magician, with a quirky expression, gave another reminder. "If you truly consume Omebella's umbilical cord remnants and possess the bloodline of the Great Mother, you will forever be unable to approach Pride Armor.

"Your backstabbing of it would fade over time, but once you become a false Omebella, it will target you first and always, unless there's someone more special present who's worth targeting."

Is this a manifestation of Pride Armor's hatred for the Earth pathway? In future battles, if I'm nearby, Franca and the others won't be able to use Pride Armor... However, between Pride Armor and a Grade O Sealed Artifact, any sane person knows which to choose, even if the latter is only for temporary use... Lumian nodded, indicating he understood.

Madam Magician didn't continue the topic.

"The deal with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church can move forward. Let me know the agreed time and place for the transaction.

"That Sealed Artifact can't be transferred by you; it's too dangerous. Have the Purifiers prepare to seal it on-site; she will appear herself."

"Alright." Lumian took this opportunity to relay other information he had gathered in the past few days.

Hearing that the Demon Warlock Burman was influenced by Harrison from Resurrection Island, wanting to touch the mark of deep death, and the evil spirit he summoned and killed was suspected to be himself, Madam Magician turned her head towards Mr. Hanged Man.

Lumian had previously heard from Madam Magician that the Tarot Club was already investigating Resurrection Island, specifically Mr. Hanged Man and Ma'am Hermit.

The one known as the 'Stormbringer' among the Major Arcana cards thoughtfully said, "This is related to something I'm investigating.

"I can't reveal the specifics yet, but you should know Harrison is likely to appear in places closely linked to death, darkness, dusk, and decay. If you encounter someone of unknown origin in such scenarios, remember to tell me."

Death, darkness, dusk, decay.. Truly someone from Resurrection Island... Lumian wasn't surprised by Mr. Hanged Man's hint.

He was more concerned about whether Resurrection Island's 'resurrection' was indeed a true resurrection.

Madam Magician could read what he was pondering.

“I've said before, we aren't Beyonders of the Death pathway, so we don't fundamentally understand the situation on Resurrection Island, and it's difficult to have a precise view of their so-called ‘resurrection.’ Maybe a direct encounter with Harrison or another islander will provide the insights you're seeking.

"The only thing I can say now is, think about Demon Warlock Burman. His condition had clearly worsened since Harrison led him to kill what seemed to be his own evil spirit. The

inhabitants of Resurrection Island likely have issues.

“Heh, I was right last time when I said the Arden evil spirit might still be alive after the related ritual."

Lumian fell silent.

Upon returning to Trier, Lumian promptly made his way to 9 Rue Orosai and knocked on the door of Room 702.

“Why are you here again?” Franca opened the door with a look of disdain.

He had left less than an hour ago!

Fortunately, it was daytime. She hadn't been planning anything yet—what if she had been scared out of her wits?

Lumian glanced at Jenna, who was curled up on the living room sofa with a book, propping herself up to look at him. He smiled at the two Demonesses and said, "I've managed to obtain the potion formula of the Demoness of Despair.”

"Ah?" Franca looked puzzled.

Hadn't he just acquired the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula?

Or had he accomplished something significant in the few minutes since he left?

Jenna was equally baffled, thinking Lumian was joking at first.

Despair was a Sequence 4 potion formula that contained the method humans used to pry open the gates to godhood. How could it be obtained so easily?

In a flash of thought, Franca and Jenna asked in unison: "Did you go to the Blue Avenger?”

“Have you finished exploring the Blue Avenger?”

“Just a preliminary exploration,” Lumian squeezed past Franca, smiling as he spoke.

“You got the Demoness of Despair potion formula from just a preliminary exploration?"

Jenna asked, somewhat incredulously.

Lumian chuckled.

"That's one of the Blood Emperor's legacies. A Sequence 4 potion formula should be considered pretty normal among the treasures.”

“What else did you find?" Franca asked curiously after closing the door.

Lumian casually took a seat on an armchair and recounted his adventure aboard the Blue Avenger, including his interactions with Madam Magician and Mr. Hanged Man from start to finish.

“That corpse wax candle sounds rather sinister,” Franca genuinely exclaimed.

Jenna nodded in agreement, feeling like she had just heard a horror story.

As a Beyonder of the Demoness pathway, friend of a Hunter, hearing that the candle was made from the corpse oils of an Iron-blooded Knight and a Demoness of Despair always made her inadvertently think of herself, Franca, and Lumian.

Just as Jenna felt Franca had voiced her own thoughts, she heard her female companion eagerly propose, “Last time in Fourth Epoch Trier, I barely saw what that misty city looked like. You didn't describe it clearly enough. Can I use that candle to make a pact and see the misty city from inside or from the air?

"You guys be my guardians!"

“That candle burns very quickly. I only tried it once, and it used up a fifth of it," Lumian thought aloud, "Let's wait for a chance to visit Bansy Harbor or enter Fourth Epoch Trier, then you can try it. Besides, Madam Magician said that without the Blood Emperor's residual aura, a specific ritual is needed to assist, and no one knows yet what that ritual is like.

Maybe once we're in Bansy or Fourth Epoch Trier, influenced by the environment, we won't need the ritual anymore.”

“That'll do," Franca relented.

A corpse wax candle that could only be used four more times obviously needed to be reserved for the best occasions.

Franca turned to Lumian. Franca, brimming with enthusiasm, said to Lumian, “Let's see the Demoness of Despair's potion formula.”

“What's my reward?" Lumian joked.

Franca clicked her tongue.

"I'll keep an eye out at the Demoness Sect for any mystical items that can change gender and give it to you for free."

With that, Franca's smile grew even brighter, her eyes sparkling.

"I really look forward to that day."

Jenna imagined it for a moment and found herself also a bit excited.

Considering the potential consequences of debating over this topic, Lumian pretended to be at a loss for words and quickly took out a sheet of delicate human skin from his Traveler's Bag and laid it on the coffee table.

The three only glanced at the potion formula before swiftly moving away, taking a moment before returning to continue.

After a few repeats, the contents of the Sequence 4 potion formula fully emerged in their minds: "Name: Despair; "Sequence: 4; "Main ingredients: Plague Mother Serpent's venom sac; Silver Hunter's crystal; "Supplementary ingredients: 10 milliliters of Plague Mother Serpent's bile, three fragments of the Silver Hunter, a fresh branch of mistletoe, and 10 milliliters of blood from seven victims who died from different plagues.

"Ritual: Involve over thirty thousand people in a severe plague. The more who die, the stronger the despair and suffering, the better the ritual effect."

In a brief silence, Franca hissed, "Isn't this ritual too evil? I can't do such a thing!"

She felt that if she succumbed to the urge to advance, to become a demigod, and caused such a plague, she would truly fall and truly become a Demoness!

Jenna shook her head, her face full of fear.

She couldn't imagine becoming that kind of person.

She would rather stay forever at the Demoness of Affliction Sequence!

"It's not just about being evil, it's obviously more difficult than the Iron-blooded Knight's ascension ritual," Lumian said from another angle.

Using the capabilities of the Demoness of Affliction along with auxiliary media and items, turning a contagion into a plague that swept through thirty thousand people wasn't too challenging. However, in any city with such a large population, official organizations existed, and they would likely notice the outbreak soon after it began. That would lead to targeted interventions and possibly even identification of the disease's source—the Demoness of Affliction herself—leading to her elimination.

If she avoided cities and spread the disease from one small town or village to another, it would take an exceedingly long time. The longer the process dragged on, the greater the chance of various mishaps that could cause the ritual to fail. For example, discovery by the official Beyonders, natural containment of the disease, or other unforeseen events.

Compared to this, the Southern Continent might be more suitable for the Demoness of Affliction to advance.

"Yes," Franca said with a pained expression, "Is there no way to bypass this ritual? Or is there an equivalent, less evil ritual?"

Jenna racked her brain but couldn't think of any shortcuts that didn't involve killing innocents.

Lumian, with a carefree smile, said, "It's simple. After you reach Sequence 5, you could switch to Iron-blooded Knight. If you care—or rather, prefer to remain a Demoness—you can then check whether the ritual of the Demoness of Unaging is evil. If it isn't, you could switch back."

"Uh..." Franca and Jenna were stunned.

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Chapter 749 Conjugate Captain and Members

□749 Conjugate Captain and Members

After her initial shock, Franca pondered thoughtfully, Maybe this idea isn't so bad after all...

Wasn't I originally aiming to become an Iron-blooded Knight? But then there's Jenna...

Seeing Franca silent, Lumian said with a meaningful smile, "There's no need to take some things too seriously. We've all used Lie before and changed our appearances, adapting quite well, haven't we? I once even turned into a dog without any lingering trauma. As long as it's not permanent and you can change back, occasionally switching things up can actually be quite fun. Remember, you're just acting."

Lumian knew Jenna was already aware that the Demoness pathway led to changes from male to female, whereas the Hunter's pathway did the opposite, occurring at Sequence 7 Witch and Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight.

He also knew Franca suspected Jenna was aware of this.

But since the Demoness of Pleasure wanted to continue deceiving herself, he didn't mind helping a bit by keeping his words vague.

"Temporarily... If the ritual of the Demoness of Unaging isn't evil, I can switch back... A

Demoness of Unaging doesn't sound so evil..." Jenna muttered to herself before saying, "!

think Lumian's suggestion is worth considering."

Franca nodded in agreement, on the verge of saying more but stopping herself.

Jenna chuckled self-deprecatingly, "I'm only at Sequence 7, just a Witch. Why am I even considering becoming a demigod and switching back and forth?

"Dammit, it feels like when I first became Showy Diva. Though I was always saving money topay off debts, it didn't stop me from dreaming of becoming a famous actress, earning thousands of verl d'or a year, and wondering how I'd spend all that money..."

“Me too, me too,” Franca echoed, attempting to explore the feasibility, "If we switch, how do we complete the ritual for a thirty-person Iron-blooded Knight team?”

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued, “You'd better pray that by then I've become an lron-blooded Knight. Having an Iron-blooded Knight as a team member can significantly reduce the number of people required. Besides, we already work well together.”

"Is that possible?" Franca first instinctively felt there was a problem, then muttered to herself, "A ritual is just a ritual. After it's done, there's really no need to maintain the previous state, meaning the captain and team members could swap places and form anew team again. What do you call that? That's called recycling, sustainable development!"

The more Franca thought about it, the more excited she became.

“Once I also become an Iron-blooded Knight, Jenna will have two demigod teammates, plus Anthony and Lugano. She shouldn't need to look for anyone else.

“If Ludwig is still with us by then, not having broken his seal, things will be even simpler; we could be his godmothers!"

We'd be Ludwig's godmothers, and Lumian would be his godfather... Although this isn't anything amazing, there are many similar examples, but still.. Jenna glanced at Franca, wanting to remind her of something, but ultimately decided against it.

The more they discussed the details, the more awkward it got, so it was best to leave them be.

With a new strategy to avoid the Demoness of Despair's ritual, Franca and Jenna felt much better.

The former said to Lumian, "There's a mysticism gathering in a few days. Touch base with the Professor and others to probe whether any members of the Moses Ascetic Order are among them. It's not too urgent since Madam Judgement told me that the Tarot Club has informants inside the Moses Ascetic Order who can provide the necessary information. But I'm not sure if that informant belongs to the Trier region and knows the local circumstances, while the Mirror Person, Griffith, is definitely in Trier.”

Lumian nodded and replied, "I also need to ask about the Harvest Priest potion formula and corresponding materials. Boosting the team's strength will help us complete the ritual later.

Jenna listened quietly for a while before interjecting, "Can you help sell that Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic for me? The level of the mysticism gatherings I attend aren't high enough; nobody can afford an item of that Sequence."

She was thinking about the Demoness of Pleasure potion materials she was about to receive from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. Franca's Pleasure was almost digested, and it wasn't too good to still owe her companion money. After all, she couldn't use the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic herself.

Lumian could probably guess Jenna's thoughts, subtly gesturing towards his Traveler's Bag.

His implication was clear: you've seen my Iron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair potion formulas; how come you haven't thought about owing me a substantial debt?

Lumian hoped this approach would make Jenna worry less about owing money, suggesting she borrow more and hire an Artisan to turn the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic into a mystical item for use.

The stronger you are, the easier it is to repay debts!

Sitting on the sofa, Jenna scoffed at Franca, gesturing towards Lumian.

Her message was clear: when I need to use those two potion formulas to advance, I'll pay you back!

"I'll keep an eye out," Franca said, unaware of the silent conversation between Lumian and Jenna.

She then said, "We can start gathering some supplementary ingredients for Iron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair now, like the mud soaked with soldiers' blood from a major battlefield and the blood of seven victims of the plague, just to be prepared in case we're short on time later. Who knows, by then, we might find another way to bypass the plague ritual. Let's get ready now."

Hearing about the preparations for the potion, Lumian nodded and then remembered something.

He stood up and walked over to the full-length mirror in the room, pressing his right hand against it.

He then activated the contract ability from Bloody Jack, sensing the mirror imprints he had left behind.

Soon, Lumian used the mirror and its otherworldly connection to detect two imprints from afar—one clear and one blurry.

The clear one belonged to the full-length mirror in Moran Avigny's study, while the blurry one changed on its own, shifting positions and making it hard to track.

I can sense it... That must be the imprint on the mirror inside the Blue Avenger's vault... Using the link between the imprint and myself, no matter how it blurs or shifts, I can teleport directly to it, as long as I can step through the mirror, Lumian

pondered for a while but decided not to borrow Franca's Mirror Cufflink for an experiment.

This was because his spiritual intuition and a warning from fate told him that if he teleported to that imprint now, he might never return, or he might return as Alista Tudor.

Withdrawing his hand, Lumian shared the results of his attempt with Franca and Jenna.

Afterward, Jenna left to visit various hospital morgues. This was both to look for opportunities to act as a Witch and to see if there were any bodies that had died from severe contagious diseases.

With the Order of All Extinction and the Sick Church not yet eradicated in Trier, there definitely were deaths from the plague, just not many that could cause a widespread outbreak.

Standing by the window, Lumian saw Jenna appear on the street and turned to Franca, saying, "You might have to become a Demoness of Despair, so it would be good to think about how to find an alternative to that ritual."

"Why must I?" Franca responded, clearly astonished.

Lumian chuckled. "Have you noticed that all the high-ranking members of the Demoness Sect are Demonesses? Do you think it's because they can't get their hands on the lron-blooded Knight potion formula and Beyonder characteristics?"

"But the Demoness Sect doesn't prohibit Demonesses from switching to the Hunter pathway..."

"That's indeed a contradiction," Lumian speculated. "I suspect that those angelic-tier Demonesses can't find higher Sequence Hunter pathway Beyonder characteristics to change back into men, so they're not keen on seeing their subordinates regain themselves.

It has become an unspoken rule. You know, most of the high-ranking Demonesses are twisted in spirit, psychopathic, and enjoy seeing others in pain while hating to see them happy."

According to the intelligence Lumian and Franca received from Madam Magician and Madam Judgement, starting from Sequence 4, Hunters and Demonesses could switch pathways, with gender determined by the highest Sequence attained, and consuming potions of the same Sequence but from neighboring pathways to enhance one's strength could cause significant problems.

Franca was silent for a long moment before saying, "If I digest the Affliction potion and still haven't found an alternative to the Despair ritual, I'll request to end my mission with the Demoness Sect from Madam Judgement. She should understand and wouldn't allow me to carry out something like spreading a horrific plague."

After saying this, Franca relaxed and muttered, "Besides, wouldn't it be odd if Jenna becomes an Iron-blooded Knight and I remain a Demoness by then?"

“Life is short, why not give it a try?” Lumian jested.

Before Franca could react, Lumian leaped over the sofa with a stride and headed out the door.

Bursts of black flames shot through the wooden door, chasing after Lumian’s back but gradually veering off target and dissipating into the air.

Franca's curse still rang clear in Lumian’s ears, "If you have what it takes, try it yourself!"

With a grin, Lumian stepped out into the street.

Watching Ludwig eat, he pulled up a chair opposite him and casually asked, "What ingredients or spices are needed for the third method of cooking those umbilical remains?"

By the side, Lugano was taken aback. "What umbilical remains?"

Lumian smiled. "The umbilical remnant of the Child of God that Father Montserrat was carrying."

Lugano's expression froze.

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Chapter 750 Source of Life

□750 Source of Life

After a few seconds, Lugano stuttered, "Can you actually eat that?”

What happens if you do eat it? What are the changes?

Does it cause the Child of God to be born?

Lumian glanced at Lugano's arm and said, "What can't be eaten?"

Lugano suddenly felt a sharp phantom pain and shook his head vigorously. "No, never mind!"

He wanted to get away from Ludwig and Lumian but couldn't think of an excuse on the spot.

After Ludwig swallowed a mouthful of cheese bread, he spoke slowly, “Top-tier ingredients don't need much accompaniment or seasoning. We just need to give it a symbol. That includes nine main staple ingredients: wheat, oats, rye, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, cassava, and any other kind of bean. Cook them with the umbilical remains in cow's or sheep's milk for half an hour, and it's ready to eat. This dish is called ‘Source of Life.”

Are you cooking or performing a mystical rite? Lumian muttered under his breath.

Of course, a Gourmet pathway’s Chef, who concocted alcoholic beverages and cooked various dishes, was essentially conducting corresponding mystical rites.

Thoughtfully, Lumian asked, “Actually, it doesn't have to be these nine ingredients, right? As long as the concept of main ingredients and their quantity is satisfied? Likewise, other kinds of milk would work too?"

Ludwig shook his head. "No, this way tastes the best."

So, what you're saying is, the method I mentioned would work but won't taste as good? No

wonder it's the Gourmet pathway, always chasing culinary perfection... Lumian stood up and instructed Lugano to buy some of the ingredients.

Lumian’s Traveler's Bag only contained dry rations that could be eaten right out of the package.

For Trier, a leading global metropolis, the ingredients Ludwig needed were easily collected, and by noon, Lumian and Lugano had returned to see Ludwig placing the main ingredients along with the umbilical remnant into a stew pot filled with several hundred milliliters of milk.

These steps had to be completed by a Chef himself, to endow them with mysticism, to coax out the designated uniqueness of the ingredients and maintain them to a degree conducive to absorption. Done by anyone else, the dish might have no effect or turn into poison.

After simmering for a while, Lumian smelled the starchy aroma mixed with the milk and saw dense milky white steam rising above the pot.

The steam did not disperse but condensed in midair and slowly settled back into the pot, carrying a tantalizing scent tinged with blood.

At that moment, Ludwig turned to Lumian and licked his lips, asking, "Do you want to add sugar or salt?"

“What differences do they bring?” Lumian asked cautiously.

Ludwig responded seriously, "The taste, one is sweet, the other is salty. Which do you prefer?"

Lumian, sensing the choice, relaxed and asked with a smile, "Which do you prefer?"

“I can't eat it..." Ludwig said regretfully, mumbling, “Sweet is tasty, salty is good too. If only it could be split into two parts, one sweet, one salty..."

As he spoke, the young boy, seemingly agitated, sprinkled some salt and then tossed in some sugar.

Lumian watched amusedly, not stopping him.

For him, the taste of the Source of Life was not important; its effect was.

Finally, Ludwig instructed Lugano to extinguish the flame and removed the contents of the pot.

It was a palm-sized piece of starchy congealment, white and soft, sticky and gooey.

The surface of the food was covered with red spots, as if blood had seeped out from within.

“It's ready to eat." Ludwig tried hard not to drool.

“Will it be effective with just one bite, or do I need to eat it all?" Lumian asked, his curiosity reminiscent of his days learning various experiments, which often

frustrated Aurore with his questions.

“All of it," Ludwig said with a look of disappointment.

Lumian picked up the steaming, slightly scalding food, brought it to his mouth, and took a bite.

The sweet and salty flavors melded together, offsetting each other's intensity in a unique way that relieved Lumian of any mental burden. He quickly devoured the Source of Life.

“Will it work right away?" an eager Lumian asked, already resolute in his intentions.

Ludwig pointed to the master bedroom.

“You'll need to sleep first.”

Sleep? With a slight sigh, Lumian left the dining table, returned to his room, and lay down on his bed.

Closing his eyes, he felt his body gradually warm up, his consciousness becoming heavier and heavier...

In the darkness, Lumian heard soft sobs.

He turned his head, carefully discerning the sound.

It was of a little girl whispering, "Mommy... Mommy...”

The voice grew louder, more mature, and more piercing.

“Mommy! Mommy!"

The cries drew closer, as if they were right beside Lumian, resonating within him.

“Mommy! Mommy!"

Inside my body... Lumian suddenly jolted awake, regaining his senses.

The darkness shattered, and sunlight pierced his eyes.

He sat up abruptly, freeing himself from the dream.

The cries of “mommy, mommy" still echoed faintly in his mind.

Did I hear the Child of God crying? Lumian looked down at himself.

He undressed and found nothing unusual, but he knew something about him was different now, an indescribable change.

He didn't feel the Great Mother's gaze, which made him even more cautious.

Dressed again, he left his room to find Lugano sneaking glances his way.

"Are—are you alright?" Lugano, who had been caught red-handed, asked instinctively.

Lumian chuckled. "It's okay, I won't become the Child of God of the Great Mother."

Seeing Lugano eyeing his stomach, Lumian added, "Nor have I conceived Her."

After speaking, he left the still-concerned Lugano behind and walked out of the apartment.

The afternoon sun was perfect, and with nothing much to do in the next couple of days, Lumian decided to stake out a particular spot.

That place was the Trier catacombs.

Knowing that Harrison from Resurrection Island might appear at places associated with death, darkness, dusk, and decay, Lumian's first thoughts were of the Dream Festival and the Trier catacombs-—locations rife with death and dark mysticism.

In the first level of the catacombs, by the "Entrance to the Old Ossuary" leading deeper below, Lumian sat next to a withered, scattered skeleton with a lit white candle, quietly observing each visitor descending into or returning from the depths.

Soon, a group of students passed by, spotting Lumian sitting alongside the catacombs bones.

The leader, a tall, thin man with glasses, asked Lumian curiously, "Why are you sitting here?"

Lumian casually responded, "I've been down to the lower levels many times and lost interest. Now, I just want to sit here quietly and watch everyone and everybody that comes and goes, to see who never leaves."

"That sounds interesting," the students said, holding their white candles. They decided to sit down too and observe if any of those returning from the depths showed signs of fear.

The tall, bespectacled man chose to sit beside Lumian and struck up a conversation.

"Do you really think not lighting a white candle here could lead to mishaps?"

Lumian glanced at him and chuckled, "You could try it, and we'd all see what happens."

Before the students could respond, Lumian spoke in a relaxed tone, "I didn't believe in these things before, but then...”

He suddenly lowered his voice.

Two of the female students blurted out, “What happened?"

“Then...” Lumian wore a reminiscent expression, "I met someone who had encountered the Montsouris ghost. You know the legend of the Montsouris ghost, right?”

The students nodded together.

You really know Trier's spooky tales well... Typical of Underground Trier creatures—students...

Lumian sighed, “His immediate family all died, and he thought he could escape it. But one day, when I went to see him, I found him hanged from a window frame.

“Since then, I've been strictly following every rule of Underground Trier.”

The students looked at each other, a bit frightened by the tale told by a peer.

"It seems we really shouldn't extinguish this candle," the tall student with glasses said regretfully.

Lumian lowered his voice again, "Have you ever encountered such a thing? There are extra books, blankets, and clothes in your dorm—none which belong to you—but the administrator tells you that no one else lives there.”

Two students turned pale, as if hearing the most terrifying ghost story.

As if they were seeking a lifeline, they asked, “Yes, that happens, do you know why?"

Lumian shook his head and sighed, "I heard those are the people who extinguished their candles here. They completely vanished, with no one remembering them.”

Hearing this, the tall student shivered instinctively.

Suddenly, he felt something tap his shoulder.

He turned to look and saw a ghastly pale skeletal hand.

"Ah!" He screamed, jumping up.

Lumian pulled back the bone hand he had picked up somewhere, his smile mocking. "You're really scaredy-cats! Scared already?"

The students were stunned, and after a while, they forcefully said, "No! That was just a reflex!"

As they seriously considered whether to beat up the prankster, someone came up the stone steps to the second level.

He wore a blue top and yellow pants, his face deeply wrinkled and his white hair sparse and dry, holding a short lit white candle.

It was an elderly catacombs administrator.

Lumian slightly frowned.

He had seen this catacombs administrator before in the giant tomb chamber housing the Samaritan Women's Spring, but the administrator hadn't used a white candle then.

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Chapter 751 "Help"

751 "Help"

Lumian had always assumed that the catacombs administrator, marked with light brown age spots, had been assimilated by the catacombs themselves, becoming part of this peculiar place, and would over time become more corpse-like, losing all semblance of life and forever sleeping within an upright, decaying coffin.

Yet, here he was, able to leave the massive tomb chamber that housed the Samaritan Women's Spring, still carrying a burning white candle.

Taking turns guarding the entrance to the Samaritan Women's Spring, the longer you stay, the deeper the catacombs' peculiar erosion takes hold, making you less and less like the living until finally, you no longer need a lit white candle to prevent being consumed by the catacombs? Can one slowly recover once they rotate out? Lumian speculated as he watched the elderly catacombs administrator ascend the steps.

As he drew closer and the candlelight illuminated his features, the group of students also got a clearer look at the newcomer.

They recognized the uniform of the catacombs administrator but had never met one so aged he seemed nearly decomposed.

His face, speckled with light brown age spots and his eyes black and icy, coupled with his faint, almost non-existent breath, instilled an involuntary fear in them, prompting them to huddle together for warmth and courage.

With each soft step echoing, the elderly caretaker stopped at the Entrance to the Old Ossuary.

He then turned, casting his chilling gaze upon Lumian.

"I need to speak with you," the catacombs administrator said in a hoarse, matter-of-fact tone.

Me? Do we know each other? Plus, I came here on a whim, driven by impulse and didn't inform anyone of my plans. Why would you need to see me? Lumian was taken aback, as were the university students.

They hadn't expected this intriguing, skilled prankster to be acquainted with such a frightening catacombs administrator.

Had he really explored the catacombs so often that he had befriended the administrators?

Perplexed, Lumian stood up and followed the elderly administrator to the side of the Entrance to the Old Ossuary.

He wanted to hear what this was all about and why he was being sought out.

In the dense darkness, with just a stub of a white candle making his face appear more ghastly, the emotionless caretaker said, "There's been an anomaly with a corpse on the fourth level's southwest corner. Handle it.”

“Me?" Lumian pointed to himself with his empty right hand.

Why are you asking me to deal with this? There are other catacombs administrators, official Beyonders for this sort of thing. Why me?

And you're ordering me around as if I'm a mercenary paid to handle such matters, without even discussing compensation...

“Correct.” The elderly administrator nodded gently. "My body and spirit are nearing decay, and I can no longer engage in combat.”

Lumian eyed the administrator with curiosity, probing, "Do you know me?"

The deep wrinkles on the administrator's face unfolded into a strange smile. "You are one of our kind.”

One of our kind... Lumian mused, a guess forming in his mind.

"Deal with it now. The longer you wait, the more troublesome it becomes." The administrator turned and headed back towards the “Entrance to the Old Ossuary.”

! came to stake out Harrison from Resurrection Island, not to work for you... Lumian muttered silently, his curiosity piqued as he followed the more corpse-like than living administrator down the stone steps.

During this, he flashed a smile and waved at the students, frightening them into silence; none dared to respond.

Once Lumian and the elderly administrator's figures had disappeared deep into the stone stairway, with only a flicker of candlelight remaining, the students finally relaxed and exhaled in relief.

That guy really knew the catacombs administrator well!

He must be extremely familiar with this place!

Were the rumors he shared actually true?

Recalling Lumian’s description of the dorm anomalies and the consequences of extinguishing a candle, the students shivered in unison, pulling their candles closer to their bodies.

Descending layer by layer, past François' Tomb and the Blood Order Hall, Lumian followed the old administrator, quickly reaching the southwest corner of the catacombs’ fourth level.

Using the remaining third of his white candle, Lumian saw a giant skeleton, about three to four meters tall, composed of bones from different corpses and shaped like a human with seven or eight heads, all eye sockets dark, void of any colored flame.

At that moment, the giant skeleton was opening tomb doors, extracting sharp bones, and adding them to its massive bone sword.

The candlelight spread only slightly, illuminating the area minimally as darkness flowed like water, bringing an indescribable chill and horror.

Even without getting close, Lumian involuntarily felt fear and resistance, as if he were walking towards death.

His blue eyes darkened to iron-black, reflecting the ghastly pallor of the aberrant skeleton.

Deep within its chest, it felt as if he had to cleave through layers of white bones to reach it.

"You see it? Take care of it,” the old caretaker commanded again, as if ordering a subordinate.

"What abilities does it have?" Lumian wasn't averse to lending a hand—he had just acquired a powerful item and was eager to use it, but he couldn't just rush into battle without understanding the monster's capabilities and planning his strategy.

The candle in the administrator's hand was now just a stub, its dim flame stubbornly clinging on.

He shook his head and said, “I'm not sure, but it's being suppressed by the catacombs, unable to show much of its potential. Once it gets dark outside, we might not have that advantage. We must clear it out now."

The catacombs are suppressing it... Lumian mused aloud, "How often have these anomalies occurred recently? Is it frequent?”

"It's normal, once or twice a month," the elderly catacombs administrator replied in a raspy voice.

Even if it's broadly sealed, some abnormalities still occur? That's similar to other areas of the Underground Trier... As Lumian was about to ask more questions, the

giant, mud-and-mold-covered skeletal aberration seemed to notice them, suddenly turning around and raising its massive bone sword.

The surface of the giant sword burst into pale-white flames.

Thud, thud, thud, the skeleton with several heads moved stiffly but quickly charged toward Lumian and the catacombs administrator.

The surrounding darkness surged over, bringing with it a bone-chilling cold and a terror that seemed to reach into their souls.

Without hesitation, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and grasped the Sword of Courage.

A warm rush quickly spread through his body.

What's there to fear?

Fight, fight, fight!

Lumian drew the iron-black greatsword and charged toward the giant skeleton and its terrifying bone sword.

Then, he swung the Sword of Courage upwards.

A bright white flame with a hint of blue burst forth from the blade.

Bang!

The iron-black greatsword collided with the bone sword, made of numerous sharp bones, in midair.

Lumian’s knees bent as his feet sank into the mud.

The skeleton's force was immense, and the bright white-blue flames tangled with the pale-white flames, mutually extinguishing each other.

Lumian was not afraid.

His eyes excited, he tightened his thighs, straightened his knees, and advanced rather than retreated, slashing with his iron-black greatsword toward the colossal creature.

The bone sword responded with the force of a falling boulder.

Boom!

The collision triggered a violent explosion, and the fierce shockwave, carrying the bright white-blue flames, struck the giant skeleton's surface, pushing it back two steps.

Lumian pursued, slashing again with the Sword of Courage.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

With each clash of the huge swords and in every massive explosion, a large number of bones fell from the skeleton, charred, and even the bone sword itself thinned significantly.

Finally, Lumian broke through its defense, cleaving into its chest with one strike.

Boom!

The bright white-blue fireball expanded there, penetrating its entire body.

The giant skeleton froze instantly.

Crash! \t collapsed entirely, like a stacked block castle knocked over.

Lumian withdrew his iron-black greatsword, turned halfway to the elderly catacombs administrator, and smiled, saying, “Neutralized.”"

As he spoke, he returned the Sword of Courage to the Traveler's Bag.

Just after this action, Lumian suddenly sobered up.

Was that it?

Although I had planned to engage in direct combat before drawing the sword, I hadn't considered just a head-on attack...

Truly the Sword of Courage...

Hearing Lumian’s words, the elderly catacombs administrator, holding the nearly extinguished white candle, slowly approached.

Lumian, taking advantage of having just provided help, casually asked, “Has anyone visited the Samaritan Women's Spring in the past few months?"

That was supposedly the strongest point of death energy in the entire catacombs, and Harrison might be drawn there.

The elderly catacombs administrator looked at Lumian in slow motion, his voice hoarse as he said, “Extinguish the candle."

What? Extinguish the candle? Are you trying to kill me? Lumian’s first reaction was that the catacombs administrator in front of him meant him harm.

Without a lit white candle here, one would be eerily erased and forgotten by all!

At that moment, the candle in the administrator's hand burned down to the end, flickered once, and was completely extinguished.

Darkness surged toward the old man, seemingly engulfing him in deathly silence.

He did not disappear.

In that instant, Lumian recalled many things, including the catacombs administrator considering him one of their own and his own guess about it.

He hadn't made his final, crazy decision when the darkness around the administrator viciously spread, enveloping him.

His white candle suddenly went out.

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Chapter 752 In the Darkness

□752 In the Darkness

Dammit!

Though Lumian had toyed with the idea of taking risks, he hadn't truly made up his mind.

The sudden extinguishing of his white candle prompted him to swear under his breath, instinctively preparing to activate the black mark on his shoulder and teleport out of the catacombs.

At that moment, a bone-chilling cold tinged with slight pain surged through the palm of his right hand.

This snap of pain brought him to his senses, thankfully without any further unpleasant changes to his body.

Indeed... Lumian instantly calmed down, abandoning the idea of using his Spirit World Traversal ability.

His suspicions were confirmed!

He clenched his right hand discreetly, ensuring the prominently-marked Underworld Daoist seal wasn't visible to anything lurking in the darkness.

After the elderly, decaying, and clearly unwell catacombs administrator mistook him for a kindred spirit, Lumian suspected it was due to the Underworld Daoist seal.

Given that the Samaritan Women's Spring was closely related to the Underworld Daoist and the catacombs of Trier were likely built to contain its overflowing influence, the administrators took turns guarding the massive tomb chamber leading to the spring.

Since catacombs administrators affected by anomalies could navigate the dark catacombs without a lit white candle and not disappear, theoretically, he should be able to as well, given his Underworld Daoist seal!

Of course, this was extremely risky. A wrong guess could mean dying without leaving a trace, causing Lumian to hesitate despite his wild impulse.

In the pure darkness, where his eyes saw nothing, Lumian felt as if he were in Trier's subterranean river, immersed in cold, damp, heavy, and silent waters.

Yet, he breathed easily; his body and soul strangely drawing air from the dense, dark "waters," sustaining his existence.

He seemed like a fish in the deep sea.

The darkness, like flowing water, layered and pressed down, isolating this space from the surrounding areas and the outside world.

The next moment, Lumian heard the old administrator's raspy, indifferent voice.

“Recently, three people tried to approach the spring, but I stopped them."

Three people... Lumian's spirit lifted as he asked, "Who were they?”

“One time it was a Blessed of darkness and death with a Hunter,” the old administrator described in his own way.

A Blessed of darkness and death with a Hunter.. Isn't that Madame Hela and me? You still remember us... Lumian realized, followed by muttered criticisms.

He had thought this elderly administrator, unlike the more active ones like Kendall and nearing a corpse-like state, didn't recognize people by sight but by sensing their presence— Lumian had encountered two catacombs administrators guiding visitors when he arrived at the Entrance to the Old Ossuary, and they didn’t see him as one of their own. Instead, they advised him not to wander alone and always keep a white candle burning for light.

“Who was the third?” Lumian pressed on.

Was it Harrison, or Monette, the incarnation of Amon active in these subterranean catacombs?

The old catacombs administrator responded in a monotone, husky voice, “An outsider, he felt similar to us but also different, so I stopped him."

Similar yet different... an outsider... Lumian pondered these key descriptions and surmised it was probably Harrison from Resurrection Island!

"What did he look like?" Lumian asked, controlling his emotions, seemingly calm.

He couldn't see through the darkness, not even the outline of the old administrator, but he sensed the other was right in front of him, no more than two meters away.

He then heard the old administrator reply: “I've been an administrator for so long, I've forgotten many things. Even death itself vanishes here, let alone our memories. I can’t remember what he looked like, only that he didn't resemble an Intisian, nor a Loenese or Feysacian."

After a brief pause, the catacombs administrator continued in his flat tone, "I should go back to rest now..."

Lumian did not try to stop him, nor did he ask further questions.

Although he hadn't heard any footsteps, nor sensed any movement ahead, a very clear thought suddenly struck him: The person has already left.

He didn't look like an Intisian, a Loenese, or a Feysacian... An outsider... Someone who had been to the fourth level of the catacombs in recent months... Lumian replayed thecatacombs administrator's responses in his mind over and over.

Suddenly, he remembered something: Franca had mentioned that she encountered a man in the catacombs who she suspected came from the world of the Celestial Master—the world they had transmigrated from. Her judgment was based on the man's appearance, which closely resembled the people from that world and was distinctly different from those of the Intisians, Loenese, Feynapotterians, and Feysacians!

So, the person Franca met was the one the elderly administrator persuaded to leave? And

that person could very well be Harrison from Resurrection Island...

/s Resurrection Island actually a node where two worlds converge?

The reason the nautical chart leading to Resurrection Island is incorrect is because it lacks mystical details; even if one reaches the designated sea area, only danger is encountered, with no sight of the goal?

This would nicely explain Franca's divination result that the "chart is genuine" and why adventurers have failed to locate Resurrection Island. The charts are indeed accurate, but they don't record the method to open the "Island's Door"!

If this is the case, there should be a deeper explanation for why Franca and the others were transmigrated, and for the purpose of the Resurrection Islanders appearing on the North and South Continents...

The good thing now is, Franca has seen someone who might be Harrison and has drawn a corresponding portrait through a ritual, which will help us in our future search.

Heh heh, Franca and Jenna's exploration yielded quite a lot of crucial information about many important matters, filled with a sense of being arranged.

This might not have been that entity's doing, but it's highly likely related to Monette, who often haunts this place...

Lumian was particularly puzzled about why the True Creator or Amon valued this matter so much. Their previous "help" was mainly about combating the evil gods beyond the barrier and didn't involve issues from another world.

Hmm, would that Celestial Worthy be counted as one of the evil gods beyond the barrier?

Does He come from the Celestial Master's world?

/s this also considered a part of the evil gods' invasion?"

Lumian speculated briefly before pondering another question: Whether to inform Franca, 007, Madame Hela, and other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society about this.

Lumian could already picture what would happen: Including Franca, some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society would desperately set out to sea, searching for Resurrection Island marked on the sea chart, failing to find the island, but finding it being even more dangerous!

But Lumian preferred to see Franca remain as she was: conflicted about her gender but generally happy.

After a moment of silence, Lumian laughed a bit out of character, whispering self-mockingly in the environment like the dark depths of the sea, "Would you avoid seeking a way to resurrect Aurore because of danger and others' expectations?

"Would you give up resisting because of danger and others' expectations?

"Would you refuse to merge with the bloodline of Omebella because of danger and others' expectations?

"No!"

Lumian made up his mind and began to focus on his surroundings.

He couldn't see anything but faintly sensed figures wandering in the darkness, felt hands reaching out to him, grabbing his arms, ankles, neck, and body, yet not having any tangible effect.

No, there was one thing—Lumian felt distinctly colder, to the point where, with the physical traits of a Reaper, he almost couldn't help but constrict his pores and shiver lightly.

He also heard faint, painful, despairing cries but couldn't discern their specific directions.

Are these the people who vanished in the catacombs before? Lumian tried to listen closely, to find one or two of the missing, to understand their current state, but it was to no avail.

Suddenly, he shivered.

The cold and the dead silence seeped into his mind.

His thoughts became slightly sluggish, and his memories of certain things grew a bit fuzzy.

The Underworld Daoists seal just prevents me from disappearing on the spot, from even dying without a trace, but it can't stop me from being slowly eroded by the abnormalities here, like those catacombs administrators? And, my erosion is clearly faster than theirs...

Lumian snapped a flame into existence, lighting the white candle in his hand.

The darkness, cold, weight, silence, and dampness retreated as the light spread.

Lumian glanced at the candle in his hand, nodding and muttering to himself, "I just interpreted the Underworld Daoist's seal as a kind of alternative white candlelight, but now it seems, they're not the same, fundamentally different. One stems from an anomaly being sealed, the other leverages the power sealing this place?"

As thoughts swirled, Lumian, holding the burning white candle, made his way back along the original route.

Upon returning to the Entrance of the Old Ossuary, he saw that the few university students who had been there were gone.

“Scared off, just like that?" Lumian scoffed softly, leisurely leaving the catacombs and returning to Place du Purgatoire.

In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca, who was about to go out to gather information on the Mirror People, saw Lumian again.

“You're here again? It's the third time today!" the Demoness of Pleasure asked, her lips twitching slightly.

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Chapter 753 Rational Franca

753 Rational Franca

Facing Franca's probing, Lumian raised an eyebrow and said, "I've again come across something important that I need to tell you."

Franca eyed Lumian suspiciously, unsure whether he was playing a prank or had actually discovered something new.

Given the frequency of his discoveries, it seemed a bit much, didn't it?

Just this morning, he had returned from the Blue Avenger, having completed an initial exploration that yielded the formula for the Demoness of Despair potion, a Sword of Courage equivalent to a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, and a specially significant corpse wax candle-all important findings. And now he had more gains in the afternoon?

Ultimately, Franca chose to believe Lumian; after all, he had proven himself a harbinger of chaos on multiple occasions.

She stepped aside to let him into the living room.

"What's it about this time?" Franca asked gravely as she closed the door.

Lumian stood by the window, back to the outside, and said seriously, "Do you remember Mr.

Hanged Man's description of Harrison?"

"I remember-he might appear in places closely linked to darkness, death, dusk, and decay," Franca replied, the oppressive atmosphere stifling her usual retort of not having forgotten what was discussed just that morning.

Lumian nodded and continued, "I had some free time, so I went to the catacombs. I met with the administrator guarding the Samaritan Women's Spring area. He told me that recently, an outsider tried to approach the spring but was stopped by him. This outsider's features are quite different from anyone from the Northern Continent..."

Franca, initially confused, shivered instinctively and blurted out, "Harrison? Was the man with the Eastern features that Jenna and I met actually Harrison?"

She immediately recalled her and Jenna's adventure at the Krismona Night Pillar.

In her urgency, she replaced the more complex description of non-North-Continent-bearing features with "Eastern features".

"It's very likely." Lumian nodded slowly.

Franca was taken aback. "Resurrection Island... Resurrection Island!"

Her lake-blue eyes sparkled with excitement and anticipation.

She asked for confirmation, "Could Resurrection Island be a node where the two worlds converge?"

"Even if it's not, it's probably closely related to your world," Lumian said, not wanting to dampen her spirits.

Franca paced back and forth excitedly, then wailed, "Why didn't I recognize him then? Why didn't I capture him? Now he's gone and we don't even have a starting point! The Eternal Blazing Sun Church is too slow, not a single piece of feedback!"

After Franca vented her frustration, Lumian calmly said, "You can't blame 007 and the others for being slow; Harrison might no longer be in Trier."

"Mmm," Franca pondered aloud. "I'll announce this at the research society meeting so members in different areas can watch out for anyone resembling Harrison."

Before Lumian could caution her, Franca muttered to herself, "I'll tell them not to seek the island until we find Harrison and obtain detailed information about Resurrection Island. It's too dangerous. If they spot Harrison, they shouldn't rush to recognize him or approach him; pretend they haven't seen him and notify President Gandalf, the chairman, Madame Hela, and us..."

Lumian listened intently and then playfully complimented her, "I thought you'd be too excited to think straight. But surprisingly, you, who usually seem carefree and not too thoughtful, have considered everything quite thoroughly."

Franca wasn't provoked; she replied with a smug grin, "What do you call that? L?? Duan is never muddled in major matters! If I have to think hard all the time, wouldn't that negate the point of relaxing?"

That made some sense... Lumian asked, puzzled, "Who's L?? Duan?"

"No need to know!" Franca answered decisively.

Lumian guessed the reason and didn't press further, simply nodding. "We'll share this at the gathering in two days."

Franca hummed in agreement, then her excitement and joy vanished, her body trembling slightly.

"What's wrong?" Lumian asked with concern.

Franca pressed her lips together, speaking softly, "I'm excited about the truth and what the future might hold, but I'm also afraid it won't meet my expectations. I'm scared of facing an answer I can't handle."

After speaking, Franca leaned on the windowsill as if drained of strength.

Lumian offered no comfort, his look one and the same as that Madam Magician had when she looked at him: pity.

He too feared that the hope for resurrection he so desperately pursued might just be an unattainable illusion.

After a moment, Lumian asked, "Want to have a drink?"

"Sure," Franca responded with a complex smile. "Getting drunk might help me forget these worries. Ah, typical brotherly comfort-offering a drink."

Two days later.

Franca met with Demoness of Black Clarice, at a hunting ground on the edge of the East Lognes Forest, as agreed.

The demigod-level Demoness had swapped her usual black court gown for dark hunting attire and a black hat that covered her long hair, giving her an air of dashing elegance and freshness.

Compared to her previously melancholic beauty, Madame Clarice now radiated a different kind of allure, equally captivating and splendid. Franca eyed the Demoness of Black with appreciation, suppressing the desires that instinctively arose, and relayed the intelligence on the Mirror People that 007 had provided in detail.

Clarice nodded gently, her smile bright as she took a wooden, burgundy-colored briefcase from her horse.

"This is your reward," said the Demoness of Black as she handed the case to Franca.

Franca did not hesitate, thanking her as she unlatched the metal fasteners and opened the modest-sized wooden briefcase.

Inside, the case was divided by pristine ice blocks showing no signs of melting, each compartment containing a bat's head with colorful markings, a gallbladder oozing blood and green bile, a bifurcated tail covered with sleek, sinister scales, and two types of dark red blood in glass vials.

"Affliction's main ingredient and most of the supplementary ingredients are here. If you're not ready to advance, don't try to break the ice I've crafted. That would

only infect the bearer with various diseases and lead to a slow death," warned the Demoness of Black."

"Thank you, Madame," Franca quickly counted what supplementary ingredients were still needed.

All that was missing was the fairly common Enfinitas Eucalyptus.

Demoness of Black Clarice commented, "You're very efficient and effective in your tasks.

Perhaps in another year or two, you'll be ready to attempt opening the gate to godhood. But then, we won't reward you with the formula and ingredients for Despair. Instead, we'll inform you of the advancement ritual in advance. Once you're nearly ready, we'll simply give you the Despair potion."

"Is this to prevent High-Sequence potion formulas from being leaked?" Franca asked, understanding dawning on her.

The Demoness of Black nodded.

"Once you earn the right to have a color precede your title, you'll truly access the High-Sequence potion formulas and some of the sect's secrets."

I also want to obtain the Demoness of Unaging potion formula from you all, but without becoming a Demoness of Unaging, I probably can't have a color precede my name... No matter, having prior knowledge of the ritual to see if it's wicked or not is sufficient... Franca didn't hide the anticipation in her expression.

She then steered the conversation back to the investigation of the Mirror People.

"Madame, to what extent should we pursue the Mirror People? Is it enough to thwart their plans and eliminate those who have escaped from the special mirror world?

"We couldn't possibly enter that special mirror world and eradicate their leaders and their foundation while Fourth Epoch Trier's seal remains intact, could we?"

Franca was probing the Demoness Sect's ultimate goal regarding the Mirror People, trying to gauge the state and thoughts of the Primordial Demoness.

Clarice looked at her and said with a refreshing smile, "Let's do what we can for now. When you've advanced to Affliction, we'll tell you more."

Becoming a Demoness of Affliction means entering the core circle of the Demoness Sect, eligible to learn some secrets? Franca was both excited to be drawing closer to the secrets of the Demoness Sect and completing tasks, and somewhat anxious.

Late at night, in a quarry cave in Underground Trier.

Angoul?ame de Fran?§ois, dressed in a brown woolen coat and wearing a gold brooch, entered this dormant area carrying a carbide lamp.

His right sleeve was rolled up, revealing a glass syringe tied around his elbow filled with a cloudy white liquid.

Behind him followed four or five Purifiers, each with a similar syringe on their arms.

Surrounded by the Purifiers were four tall iron-gray steam robots, responsible for carrying an item over two meters long and about six feet wide.

The item was covered with a red flannel cloth, hiding any details.

Angoul?ame stopped in the middle of the quarry, gesturing for his teammates to halt as well.

The iron-gray steam robots then set the item on the ground.

As the flannel cover was lifted, a beautifully crafted, classical-looking bed was revealed, making Angoul?ame and his team feel tired and drawn to its inviting comfort, wanting to lie down for a good sleep.

Angoul?ame quickly looked away and, using the hand holding the carbide lamp, pushed the plunger of the syringe, injecting more of the liquid into his body.

Following similar actions from the other Purifiers, a figure in a black nun's outfit suddenly emerged from the other side of the quarry.

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Chapter 754 Two Spirits

754 Two Spirits

When the feminine silhouette emerged from the darkness, AngoulÃªme and his companions instantly tensed up.

They were still unsure how to make the humanoid Sealed Artifact move towards the bed on its own; they could only hope that the bed, also a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, would exert its allure to entice beings to lie upon it.

Of course, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church wouldn't send merely a team of highest-ranking Purifiers for a transaction involving a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact. Undoubtedly, a demigod was overseeing from the shadows, but in the event of an incident, how many could be saved from the clash of two Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts was an uncertainty.

As soon as the somber yet serene-looking woman appeared, she moved toward the elegant, classical bed as if summoned or commanded.

AngoulÃªme and the others remained perfectly still, almost like statues, fearing any sudden movement might startle their target and hinder the positive development of the situation.

Finally, the figure in the black nun's attire lay down on the bed.

She yawned slightly, then closed her eyes, her whole being radiating profound exhaustion, as if she had spent her life's energy.

She fell asleep.

Several Purifiers stepped forward, placing their differently colored leather cases on the ground.

They then pulled up the red flannel cloth to cover both the humanoid Sealed Artifact and the classical bed together.

The iron-gray steam robots also set down another leather case they were carrying.

They lifted the bed and, along with the Purifiers, left the quarry at a measured pace.

Soon, only AngoulÃªme and the nine cases on the ground behind him remained.

At the edge of the quarry, enveloped in deep darkness, a figure dressed in assassin's garb emerged.

She did not speak to AngoulÃªme but moved past the Purifier deacon to inspect the cases one by one.

Eight of the cases were either filled with shimmering gold bars or packed with numerous gold coins, all quite heavy, making Franca's gaze seem disrupted by the gleam of gold.

I've never seen so much gold in my two lifetimes combined... shame it's not mine, Franca thought regretfully as she stowed the gold, valued at 1.2 million verl d'or, along with the cases into her Traveler's Bag.

Another case contained the main and supplementary ingredients for the Pleasure potion and two folded scrolls.

After verifying everything was correct, Franca nodded to AngoulÃªme in a cold, businesslike tone befitting their professional relationship.

"You keep your promises well. I will continue to provide you with intel.

"Praise the Sun, you are the God of Deeds!" AngoulÃªme exclaimed, spreading his arms slightly in homage, attributing all glory and success to the deity.

Franca then left the quarry, continuously circling around and using her Demoness powers to erase any traces, countering any potential divination or prophecy.

After about seven or eight minutes, she met with Lumian in a secret tunnel in Underground Trier and was transported away by teleportation.

Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca handed over the ingredients related to the Pleasure potion along with the leather case to Jenna, while Lumian was already seated on the armchair, engrossed in a reorganized dossier of the Sealed Artifact which wasn't written in a fixed format.

"Number: 1-147 "Original Name: Clémence Athana.

"This Sealed Artifact was born in a magistrate's family in Spahm Village, Zamet region of Upper Hornacis. She was sent to the Zamet Cloister upon reaching adulthood and, two years later, entered Suhit University to study paleobiology. After graduation, she stayed on as a faculty member.

"Her research in paleobiology primarily focused on tracing the remnants of mythical creatures to prove their existence. At the age of twenty-nine, she abruptly resigned from her academic post and returned to her native village, where she secluded herself in her room.

"Over the next two years, her family suffered a series of misfortunes: "Her father, intoxicated, fell into a cesspit at night and drowned; her mother, overcome with grief, hanged herself; her siblings killed each other over inheritance disputes; and her sister, who had gone home to intervene, went missing and was never found...

"The villagers of Spahm blamed her for bringing misfortune and sought to expel her. Not long after, a strange mental plague broke out in the village. By the time the Purifiers realized the issue, it was beyond redemption, and they had to purify all the infected...

"Further research indicated that Clémence Athana harbored two spirits within her, with her soul appearing stitched together.

"It is believed that one spirit orchestrated the tragedies of her family and the village's infection, while the other, unable to cope, became muddleheaded yet fought back instinctively, eventually going mad...

"Additionally, she carried another kind of corruption, distinct from her abilities to manipulate minds and spirits.

"It remains unclear when this corruption first appeared, whether before her return to her hometown or after the death of her parents...

"Sealed two years and four months ago."

"She was sealed not long ago. Among all Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts, her number must be one of the latest," Franca remarked, having appeared behind Lumian at some point, her elbows resting on the back of the armchair as she finished reading the dossier.

Lumian chuckled softly after a pause. "Perhaps one day, this will be my fate."

He could faintly sense Clémence Athana's struggle and resistance, but she ultimately failed and became a monster.

Franca opened her mouth, unsure of what to say.

After a few seconds, she patted Lumian on the shoulder and said, "Look on the bright side, in the grand scheme of things, we're all going to die. What matters is what we do on the path to death."

Lumian folded up the dossier, nodded solemnly, and responded, "Until death!"

At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society materialized in various locations.

Franca immediately spotted 007, who was wearing the lion headgear. She adjusted her hood and approached, asking curiously, "We've received our reward. What's yours?"

"007" AngoulÃªme replied with mixed emotions, "I can now wield a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact with less severe adverse effects."

"Wow, you're basically on reserve for demigod status!" Franca exclaimed enviously.

Her thoughts then turned to Lumian, who also possessed a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact with minor negative effects, essentially putting him in the same reserve category.

Before Lumian embarked on the paths of the divine, 007 had already been a Sequence 5 Beyonder. He was just too busy to serve as vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, so he had never shared this with others.

Thinking about it, 007 wasn't really that enviable after all.

007 glanced at Franca and said, "I used to dream of advancing to Sequence 4 and becoming a demigod, but as I handled more and more Beyonder events, I started to think that it might not be such a good thing. Sigh, fate has pushed me to this point; I can only keep moving forward."

"Right," Franca replied, feeling a sense of kinship. "I have a very important announcement to make soon."

"What is it?" 007 couldn't help but ask impulsively.

Why is Hidden Blade involved in an important matter again?

What is it this time?

So far, the news she brought was crazier and more shocking one after the other!

"You'll find out soon enough." Franca sighed.

She then looked towards Lumian, who was now disguised as Aurore, donning a warlock robe and a black hood, heading towards the Academy group's gathering place.

Lumian, in disguise, nodded gently at Franca.

Seeing that the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had nearly all arrived, Franca walked directly to the massive stone chair.

Dressed in a plain white robe and resembling a half-giant, Gandalf was nearby. He whispered, "Are you going to warn everyone about the Mirror People?"

"No," Franca looked at Madame Hela standing on the other side and conjured a simple megaphone from the cold air.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have an announcement to make," Franca's voice echoed through the ancient and dilapidated palace.

Members like Isotope, Bear, and Cerberus of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society turned their attention towards the depth of the palace to see who was speaking.

They suddenly felt uneasy.

The news Hidden Blade had brought before was never good!

Although she helped the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society clean up its internal saboteurs and established more reliable rules, avoiding foreseeable harm, the surging tide still left every participant unnerved.

As everyone ceased their discussions and looked towards her, Franca cleared her throat and started from the rumors about Resurrection Island, recounting her encounter in the catacombs of Trier with a man bearing Eastern looks in their original world.

So, it's about this... There's a continuation of that incident? 007 relaxed slightly.

A humming sound arose in different parts of the old palace, and members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society couldn't help whispering among themselves.

For most of them, they had already accepted reality, adapted to their current lives, and even had different pursuits. But now, someone was telling them that the matter of transmigration still had secrets; maybe they could even go home!

Franca then spoke about Harrison of Resurrection Island, involved with death and dark forces, searching for something across the Northern and Southern Continents, but she didn't mention Demon Warlock Burman-it was too easy to link that to the great adventurer Louis Berry.

In the sudden silence inside the palace, Franca shared her and Lumian's speculation, "Resurrection Island might be a nexus where the two worlds converge.

"We must find Harrison and get information about Resurrection Island from him!"

After speaking in one breath, Franca's gaze slowly moved from the somewhat dazed faces of the audience to Madame Hela nearby.

She noticed an indescribable emotion in the dark pupils visible behind Madame Hela's black latticed veil.

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Chapter 755 Different Attitudes

755 Different Attitudes

Despite Madame Hela's usual restraint and calm, there are clear emotional ripples this time...

Franca thoughtfully withdrew her gaze.

By then, many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had regained their composure from the shock, voicing their opinions with both excitement and urgency.

Someone shouted, "Hidden Blade, you can't make such assumptions so lightly!"

Franca roared back immediately, "Whether or not Resurrection Island is a nexus between two worlds, we still need to find Harrison! This isn't a conclusion; it's a direction for our investigation!"

Another person yelled, "How can we find someone just based on a name?"

"I have his portrait!" Franca responded instantly.

As members expressed their expectations, posed questions, and sought answers, a voice, slightly out of control, shouted, "Why can't you just live peacefully in the present?"

Franca looked towards the source of the sound and saw a male member known as Mole.

After Mole spoke up, several members loudly said, "I don't want to risk everything for a slim hope."

"Why can't you give up these fantasies?"

"I have no interest in returning to our previous world!"

In response to the dissenting voices, Franca wasn't surprised but internally sighed, People vary so much when you gather a hundred of them...

She sincerely responded, "Searching for Harrison and verifying the situation on Resurrection Island are both entirely voluntary. Those who want to uncover the truth about our transmigration can decide if it's worth the risk. Those who aren't interested can continue as before, but please don't stop others from participating."

Mole and others were clearly still worried that investigating Resurrection Island might disrupt their current lives, but with Franca offering the choice of "free will," they could only mutter and retreat to the fringes.

Seizing the opportunity, Franca added, "For now, our investigation into Resurrection Island is limited to gathering information. Do not go looking for it- it's very dangerous. Once we obtain key information from Harrison, we'll discuss whether or not to go to the island and how to approach it. Right now, let me show you Harrison's portrait."

Cheers erupted from some of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members who had grasped the situation: "Hidden Blade is awesome!"

"Hidden Blade, I love you!"

"Praise be to Hidden Blade!"

Franca chuckled and tilted her head, her worries and fears somewhat alleviated by the emotions of the crowd.

She knew that these members were not without fear of the unknown results of the investigation and the potentially disappointing truths it might reveal, but they had waited too long and desired too much. Even a small glimmer of hope could temporarily relieve their pain and sorrow, releasing their excitement and joy.

Franca then took a deep breath, pulled out Harrison's portrait, and affixed it to the back of the massive stone chair.

"Everyone, take turns to come and take a look!" Franca called out, stepping back from the area around the speckled stone chair.

"Do you really think that's a nexus between two worlds?" Gandalf stopped Franca, asking fervently.

Franca smiled awkwardly. "It's just a theory, still."

Gandalf nodded with satisfaction.

"That's no problem. Make bold assumptions, but verify them carefully."

"What, in your opinion, is the relationship between Resurrection Island and our world?"

Franca asked Gandalf, both hopeful and nervous.

Gandalf chuckled. "I don't have any predetermined conclusions yet; I need more information to study."

Franca glanced around and lowered her voice.

She shared the existence of the Samaritan Women's Spring, Underworld Daoist, and Celestial Master with President Gandalf, whom she and Lumian had decided to inform before attending this meeting-previously, they had only shared this with Hela. After all, they had worked together in the real world before.

Gandalf listened attentively and made a judgment.

"The relationship between the two worlds might be closer than we anticipated.

"The phenomenon of transmigration may have started even earlier."

Before Hidden Blade Franca could respond, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society mused to himself, "With so many signs and traces, it's incredible we haven't encountered them, while you frequently do."

This probably requires your praise for the True Creator.. Franca barely held back a sarcastic remark.

After parting from the half-giant Gandalf, she was cornered by the tall 007.

"We've yet to find the person who might be Harrison," 007 simply reported on the previous "person-finding" efforts.

"Maybe he's no longer in Trier." Franca refrained from complaining about the Purifiers' inefficiency.

She glanced at "007" in lion headgear and cautiously asked, "Would you want to return to our original world?"

007 paused for a few seconds before replying, "Of course, but I'm afraid everything has changed.

"Although the era from which Emperor Roselle transmigrated isn't far from ours-if we returned now, we'd only miss a few days of life-no one has gone back yet, so we can't be certain. Maybe the rules for coming and going are fundamentally different."

Franca fell silent.

007 glanced at Gandalf sitting on the steps, scribbling in a notebook, and asked Franca, "What did you discuss with the president? He seemed quite stirred."

Franca, managing her emotions, took the opportunity to share with 007 what she had told Gandalf.

"007" AngoulÃªme was stunned for a moment, then clenched his teeth and said, "Why didn't you share this information sooner? What else haven't you told us?"

"I was just afraid you would really go all 007?" Franca joked, only to be met by a stern look from 007, which made her chuckle awkwardly. "Sometimes, it's not that

I don't want to share; it's either not the right time or I don't have the permission."

I'm not Lumian, who has to squeeze out information like toothpaste-if I could tell, I would share everything... Franca added in her mind.

007 knew that Hidden Blade might have joined a secret organization and understood her predicament. He took a couple of deep breaths to calm himself.

He mumbled to himself, "You all have found so many traces of another world beneath Trier; I can't believe the two major churches that have watched over Trier for over a thousand years haven't discovered anything.

"When I become a demigod, a senior deacon, maybe I'll be allowed to look at those dossiers, right?"

"Mmm, mmm," Franca agreed repeatedly.

In the corner where the Academy group gathered, Professor, Associate Professor, Principal, Isotope and others had all viewed Franca's portrait of Harrison posted on the stone chair and were eagerly discussing related matters.

A woman with the periodic table painted on her face in washable paints asked those around her, "If we really find a way and a path back to our world, would you want to return?"

Professor and Associate Professor looked at each other and said, "If we can bring our children without having to leave anyone behind, we definitely hope to go back."

Principal, suspected of being a Sanguine, laughed.

"If I could keep my Beyonder abilities, then I'd be willing to go back."

Isotope, with fake heads on each shoulder and wearing a mannequin headgear, chuckled.

"I have no attachments or affairs that a mere modern life could replace with the sense of accomplishment I've gained in this world; I don't want to go back."

"What about you, Muggle?" asked Periodic Table, turning to the quietly listening Lumian.

Lumian paused for a moment and said in the voice of Aurore, "That's the place I long for day and night.

"But I'd also like to take some people who are close to me with me."

After much discussion, the topics of "going home" and "Resurrection Island" finally cooled down, and as everyone naturally fell silent, Lumian lifted his beautifully curved chin and looked around, asking, "Does anyone know someone from the Moses Ascetic Order" Suddenly, most members of the Academy group

turned their gaze toward Muggle, observing her rosy lips and pale skin exposed outside her hoodie.

"Why are you asking this all of a sudden?" asked Professor wearing a butterfly bow tie.

The Academy group had many Warlocks and had exchanged information about the Moses Ascetic Order, so it wasn't surprising that "Muggle" knew about this secret organization.

Lumian responded with a smile, "I want to pass a message to the Moses Ascetic Order that there's a traitor among them."

"A traitor?" Isotope and company listened, somewhat bewildered.

Without giving a direct response, Lumian said, "Have you heard of 'Mirror People'?"

According to Madame Hela's latest statement, the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who could enter the Nation of the Evernight through the spell were at most mentally disrupted or harbored corruption inside; it was unlikely that their life forms had changed without detection, so it could preliminarily be ruled out that there were any Mirror People lurking here.

"I've heard of it," said Professor in a black half-face mask, nodding solemnly. "There have been occasional incidents of original hosts being replaced by their Mirror People, but why these Mirror People appear is still unknown, and perhaps the official Beyonders have the relevant information."

You seem to know quite a bit about the mystical world... Lumian's lips curled up with a smile.

"I know a Mirror Person named Griffith who has replaced his original host, and his host was a member of the Moses Ascetic Order; of course, Griffith certainly isn't the name he used in the Moses Ascetic Order."

Members of the "Academy" group remained silent, simply nodding their heads.

Lumian did not continue the topic.

Professor looked at her and ventured to ask, "Muggle, are you still in Trier?"

"Yes," Lumian responded with a smile.

Professor looked around and said, "I'm planning to organize a real-world gathering for members in Trier soon; do you want to join? It will primarily involve our Academy group."

Lumian's eyes flickered, and he smiled coyly. "Okay."

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Chapter 756 "Farm" Team

756 "Farm" Team

After finalizing the details of the real-world gathering through Madame Hela's messenger, including the time, place, password, and method of the meeting, Lumian quietly listened to the members of the Academy group exchanging ideas, occasionally joining in the discussion.

With his current mastery of mysticism, he no longer needed to hide his ignorance.

After a while, Lumian asked if anyone had the potion formula and related ingredients for the Harvest Priest, but the answer was no.

He then walked over to another group near the ancient palace's gate.

Called the “Farm,” it was a group of Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members who enjoyed planting and accumulating wealth. Lumian had once overheard their everyday conversations about how many hectares they had purchased, their plans to save for a ranch, their forest harvests, the effectiveness of their compost, the Church of Earth Mother's batch of modified wheat seeds suitable for arid regions, their growing savings, and how work brought them joy.

After that, Lumian never eavesdropped again.

As he approached the Farm members, he smelled the earthy scents of soil, fertilizer, grass, grains, and livestock—a familiar and comforting aroma that transported him back to Cordu Village, back to his sister's side.

The experienced Lumian instantly became alert.

This... reminds me of life in Cordu for one thing, but on another level, the acts of farming, herding, and harvesting resonate with the Omebella bloodline within me. The Goddess of Harvest is indeed living up to Her name; as expected of the Great Mother's Child of God...

Lumian quickly figured out the reason.

Although consuming the remnants of Omebella’s umbilical cord hadn't enhanced his powers or abilities, it had attracted the Great Mother's gaze, allowing creatures She had created or blessed to sense his bloodline, though it hadn't been without effect.

Omebella's residual bloodline subtly altered his perceptions of certain things, indirectly affecting his psyche.

As Lumian listened to the Farm group members discussing, he keenly observed each person's reactions.

Although only creatures lacking necessary intellect would mistake him for a child of the Great Mother, those who had received the Great Mother's boons or were directly created by Her could sense the Omebella bloodline in him, though they wouldn't misidentify him.

This would help Lumian determine through any unusual reactions among the Farm group members whether they covertly worshiped the Great Mother.

After a few minutes, Lumian tentatively confirmed that none of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members in this area were problematic.

He then mimicked Aurore's voice when she pressed her voice down, looked around, and asked, "Does anyone have the Harvest Priest's potion formula or related ingredients? If you're unwilling to disclose the formula, you could sell me a ready-made Harvest Priest potion."

"Muggle, I thought you were a 'Warlock,'" a Farm group member called "Breeder Master" asked, puzzled.

He was tall with a rugged, wild demeanor and wore a primitive tribal mask made from animal fur.

"I Know someone who needs it," Lumian laughed, "and I thought I might make a small profit while helping out."

Breeder Master further inquired, "You should know that a ready-made potion needs to be consumed quickly before it is absorbed by the container and becomes a Sealed Artifact with strong negative effects. Moreover, trading through Madame Hela's messenger would delay things. You have to drink it immediately upon receipt. Will there be no issues?"

Madame Hela's messenger sure is busy... Lumian teased inwardly. "No problem."

After questioning and observing, he was sure that the Doctor potion from Lugano had been fully digested.

This was a Doctor who had treated an Angel and fake Angel!

After Ludwig was brutally beaten by Loki, it was Lugano who had treated and healed his wounds. Lumian himself had received Lugano's treatments on multiple occasions.

After contemplating for a moment, Breeder Master said, "20,000 gold risot for a ready-made Harvest Priest potion.

"It's pricier than just buying the ingredients separately, but we have to respect intellectual property rights. Normally, I'd charge between 30,000 and 35,000, but

since we're all members of the society...”

About 40,000 verl d'or, Lumian nodded slightly in agreement.

“No problem."

He already had 19,000 gold risot in bills and coins on him, so he made an upfront payment of 10,000, agreeing to pay the balance upon receipt of the potion.

They brought in 007 from the Sanctuary group to notarize the agreement.

“Pleasure doing business,” said Breeder Master with a smile to Muggle as he pocketed the deposit.

He then turned to other members of the Farm group and exclaimed, "Now I have the funds for more experiments! I've been studying those mushrooms created by the legendary Druid Frank Lee. I find his philosophy intriguing and worth following.

"Given the myriad supernatural beings in this world, including Beyonders, why not merge the blood, flesh, milk of these beings with ordinary plants? Whether through hybridization or genetic modification, with the aid of mystical powers, it can be done relatively easily, and after several generations, the traits stabilize, resulting in plants with magical effects but no Beyonder characteristics..."

As Lumian listened, a strange unease began to form within him.

He never felt this way even when discussing death-related topics with the Purgatory group!

The first time he heard the name Frank Lee was in the Cordu Village dream, where an official Beyonder named Ryan mentioned a saying that circulated at sea: "I'd rather come face to face with Pirate Admirals or even Kings than run into a bloke named Frank Lee.”

Later, when Lumian was at sea, he heard no rumors about Frank Lee, nor did he know if Ryan was exaggerating in the dream or if those who knew of Frank Lee's deeds dared not or chose not to mention him again.

Sanctuary team.

Franca looked towards a member nicknamed "Someone" and asked with a smile, "Weren't you looking for the Marauder pathway Sequence 5 Dream Stealer's Beyonder characteristic? Still need it? I just got one from a friend.

“If you don't want it, I'll go to an Artisan to craft a mystical item with that Beyonder characteristic."

Someone, wearing an eyepatch-style black half-face mask, sized up Franca and replied, “It seems your friend isn't you.

"I don't need it anymore, but wouldn't mind another.

“One flat rate, 5000 pounds.”

That's about 120,000 verl d'or... Franca laughed and said, "200,000 verl d'or, not a coin less."

"Someone" calculated for a moment and countered, "150,000 verl d'or at best, or forget it.”

Franca thought for a few seconds and said, "You can pay in two installments, the first right now of 120,000 verl d'or, and the second of 60,000 within three months of receiving the Beyonder characteristic, secured by 007's notarization to enforce the contract.”

Someone paused to think, then asked with a smile, "Aren't you worried I'll default after getting the Beyonder characteristic? A Notary's notarization isn't foolproof, remember, I was once a renowned Swindler.”

Franca smiled. "Who's better, you or Bard?"

Someone fell silent.

“Bard has already been dealt with by me and my comrades. Unless you're willing to give up a very useful trading platform over 60,000 verl d'or, I'm not worried about you defaulting, your Beyonder characteristics are also quite valuable." Franca, who had mafia ties, made her intimidating remark as casually as discussing what's for dinner.

“It won't be long before I surpass him," replied Someone after a few seconds, “Deal!”

“No rush,” Franca said with a smile, "The final payment must be in gold.”

…

In the following days, Lumian had no particular business and wandered around Trier, tracking several Mirror People and looking for Harrison's whereabouts based on intelligence provided by 007.

He was supposed to collect a reward from Mr. K, but his heart resisted, and he kept delaying.

Franca completed her transaction with Someone from the Sanctuary group, receiving a down payment composed of bills and coins totaling 5000 pounds.

She also gave Jenna 15,000 verl d'or in bills, stipulating that the remaining payment of 60,000 verl d'or in gold belonged entirely to her.

Jenna lost the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic but also paid off the 45,000 verl d'or she owed Franca, now possessing 16,000 verl d'or and gold Loen pound worth 120,000 verl dor.

She had never been so wealthy before.

She always knew that potion formulas and Beyonder characteristics were valuable and even knew their approximate price range, but she had never paid in full in one go nor truly sold any until now. Now she was experiencing what it felt like to earn money like the Pirate Hunter Gehrman Sparrow.

That evening, just as Lumian returned to his rented apartment planning to change his clothes and muster the courage to see Mr. K, the wall lamp in his room suddenly tinged with eerie green and pale colors.

They blended bizarrely together.

Then, Lumian saw his messenger, the mummified Penitent in a black clergy robe, emerge from the void.

Almost simultaneously, Madame Hela's messenger, a skull made of pure silver, appeared shrouded in darkness.

Shortly after, the silhouette of a doll messenger rapidly took shape.

"..." Lumian was somewhat stunned.

Would the messengers fight each other?

Do! have three letters?

One should be for the Harvest Priest potion, another likely a Sealed Artifact made from the Beyonder characteristics of Hisoka, but what about the third?

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Chapter 757 Harvest Priest

757 Harvest Priest

As Penitent Baynfel and the pure silver skull appeared, the doll messenger, dressed in a pale gold mini dress, instantly floated beside Lumian as if confronting the other two messengers.

The pure silver skull set down a burlap bag on the desk from its mouth amidst the surrounding darkness, then fixed its burning pale eyes on Lumian.

Penitent Baynfel dropped a folded letter and silently returned to the spirit world, vanishing from the room.

Lumian wanted to take this opportunity to chat with his messenger about his past and ask about his relationship with the True Creator, but given the circumstances, he had to suppress his curiosity and focus on the pure silver skull instead.

Lumian picked up the burlap bag, which resembled a book bag, and pulled out an aluminum flask.

Behind him, the doll messenger floated closer, curiously looking on.

Lumian unscrewed the grayish-white flask to find a golden liquid inside, brimming with white foam.

If it weren't for the lack of a malty scent, he would have thought it was beer.

He took out a piece of paper from the burlap bag, written in ancient Feysac by Madame Hela: "It is indeed the Harvest Priest potion.

"It needs to be drunk within 15 minutes, or you will end up with a alcohol flask that could bring harvests."

Seeing that Madame Hela had helped with the identification and there was a notarized contract in place, Lumian immediately took out the remaining 9000 gold risot from his Traveler's Bag and the 1000 gold risot notes he had exchanged in the last two days.

"This is the final payment.” Lumian put the gold risot into the burlap bag and handed it to the skull made of pure silver.

The pure silver skull bit down on the burlap bag, merged with the surrounding darkness, and disappeared in an instant.

Lumian then turned his head and said with a smile to the doll messenger, "What's your take?"

The doll messenger snorted.

"I will surpass them eventually!

“I will become the first, no, the second most powerful messenger in this world!"

“Quite ambitious,” Lumian replied, half-seriously, half in jest.

He wasn't surprised by the doll messenger's response; he already knew about the special nature of Penitent Baynfel and the pure silver skull.

The doll messenger then hurled a dark, translucent orb, resembling a crystal ball but more ethereal, towards Lumian, who easily caught it. Inside the bent, transparent barrier, a glossy black bone ring floated, its surface carved with the twisted, agonizing face of a demon, whose eyes contained two vague shadows.

After letting the folded letter fall to the surface of the desk, the doll messenger also left Lumian's room.

It is indeed a Sealed Artifact made from Hisoka's Beyonder characteristics... Lumian couldn't afford to check the artifact's effects and impacts right away, so he stored the dark transparent orb and the folded letter first, and then began to read the letter brought by his messenger.

The letter was very brief: “Seven of Wands: "Do you still remember your promise? We now need your help.

“If you don't have other important matters recently, please meet us at the following coordinates, where I will tell you the details."

“Knight of Swords.”

Knight of Swords needs help... Lumian came to a realization.

In the incident of the sea prayer ritual, he had asked this Minor Arcana card holder, working under Ma‘am Hermit, for help. At the time, he did not ask for a payment but mentioned that he might need a bit of help if he went to the Southern Continent, to which he readily agreed.

Fortunately, I'm relatively free lately. Lumian put away the letter from the Knight of Swords, screwed the cap back on the grayish-white flask, and walked out of the room with it in hand.

Lugano was cleaning up the plates and cutlery that Ludwig had left behind.

“Your Harvest Priest potion has arrived," Lumian stated calmly.

Lugano froze, a look of confusion washing over his face.

After a few seconds, he pointed to the flask in his employer's hand and asked, "This?"

“Yes, it looks more drinkable than the potions from the Hunter pathway,” Lumian chuckled as he shook the flask. "You have ten minutes to decide whether you want to drink it.”

"Ten minutes?" Lugano exclaimed, startled.

Lumian nodded.

“No, eight minutes.

"If you haven't made up your mind in eight minutes, I'll find a stray dog downstairs or catch a rat and feed it this potion."

“Don't I need to prepare mentally and physically?” Fear was written all over Lugano's face.

This seems too casual, doesn't it?

This is a potion, after all!

If his mental and physical state weren't right, he could either turn into a monster or die on the spot!

“Only seven minutes left now," Lumian reminded with a smile. "Your condition is fine; you just need to relax and remember that you are Ludwig's nanny and family doctor.”

“Is that really okay?" Lugano still couldn't believe it.

"Six minutes,” Lumian said coldly.

".." Lugano was stunned.

How could time pass so quickly?

Gritting his teeth, he replied, "Alright!

But I need to drink it in Underground Trier.”

"Hmm?" Lumian raised an eyebrow.

Lugano quickly explained, "I feel that standing on the earth helps me maintain my state while drinking the potion.”

“The Earth pathway, huh..." Carrying the grayish-white flask, Lumian turned and walked out of the room.

Lugano followed, pulling out a bunch of banknotes from his pocket.

“This is all my savings, 15,000 verl d'or.

“You said before, the rest would be covered by you."

Lumian nodded nonchalantly and accepted the 15,000 verl d'or without hesitation.

He still had 86,000 verl d'or, including a few coins and gold bars.

Once on the street, Lumian headed directly to the nearest entrance to Underground Trier. A stray dog passed by, barking as if to threaten them.

Lumian chuckled and “tested” Lugano, "Can you understand what it's saying?"

With his mind full of thoughts about the Harvest Priest potion, Lugano asked in astonishment, "Y-you can understand? Do you have a mystical item from a Beast Tamer?"

Lumian laughed to himself. "It says, ‘I heard you're going to feed me a portion of the Harvest Priest potion; why haven't you given it to me yet?”

“.." Lugano then realized his employer was joking.

On second thought, Lugano felt like he was being mocked by his employer.

He's implying that I'm a stray dog!

I was indeed wondering why he hasn't given me the Harvest Priest potion yet...

Once in Underground Trier, Lumian expertly navigated to a deserted tunnel and tossed the grayish-white flask at Lugano.

As Lugano fumbled to catch the flask, Lumian coldly reminded, "Two minutes left.”

Lugano took a deep breath, unscrewed the cap, and saw the potion inside that looked like beer.

He began to recall how he had cared for and treated Ludwig, using this memory to slightly relax his tense spirit.

After a few seconds and two deep breaths, Lugano raised the grayish-white flask and gulped down the potion.

Lumian, who made a ball of bright white flame as a light source, silently watched, observing the various changes in Lugano's body.

He had not forgotten that his "servant" was quite unusual; he could stay conscious during the Dream Festival!

Lugano's face quickly twisted in agony, as if experiencing the pain of Ludwig biting off his arm again.

Lumian saw his feet slowly sinking into the soil, the hairs on his exposed skin visibly thickening and lengthening, and his brown hair doing the same, his brown eyes losing focus.

After a while, the transformations stopped, and Lugano's expression gradually eased.

It went smoothly... He fits the Planter pathway well... I'm not sure if this is due to his own anomalies... Lumian muttered silently, watching as Lugano's eyes slowly regained clarity and reason.

He asked in a relaxed posture, "What abilities have you gained?"

Although it was frowned upon in the mystical world to inquire about the details of someone's Beyonder abilities, who could be blamed because the person across from him was his "servant"?

Lugano saw no problem with this, checking his condition while savoring the acquired mystical knowledge.

"My healing capabilities have expanded. I can now cure diseases in plants and fields...

"I can also catalyze seeds, making them grow or reproduce faster.

"This divides into two scenarios: the first is placing both hands on the earth, which allows seeds and plants within a thirty-meter radius to grow or reproduce much faster than normal, though not instantaneously complete their lifecycle from gestation to returning to the land in a few seconds or minutes. The second is directly holding some seeds or plants and fully catalyzing the life contained within them.

"The latter scenario allows me, in a very short time, to create a large amount of vines, which can be used to entangle and control enemies."

Hearing this, Lumian thoughtfully asked, "So you can only fully catalyze the life contained within plants, and it can't be used on humans?"

"No." Lugano shook his head.

Lumian continued, "If you encounter a creature that is essentially a plant but has intelligence, could you, by direct contact, cause all of its life to burst forth in seconds or tens of seconds, completing its entire life cycle?"

“First, I'd need to be able to touch it..." Lugano indicated that this was dangerous and not something he, not specialized in combat, could manage.

He added, "Plus, I'm not sure it would have the effect you're imagining.”

Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly, signaling Lugano to continue.

Lugano gathered his thoughts and said, "If I could obtain seeds of different mutant plants, my catalytic abilities could play a significant role in combat.

“I can also command plants and insects within a thirty-meter radius to provide me with appropriate support, as long as it does not exceed their species limitations. However, intelligent ones won't work.

"I've also gained a few ritual spells, mainly for summoning rain or clearing the skies."

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Chapter 758 Devil's Whispers

758 Devil's Whispers

This really leans towards the concept of harvest... If I could obtain seeds from magical plants or be in an environment dominated by magical plants and special insects, the Harvest Priest's combative abilities using mystical means wouldn't be too bad; they might even be impressively effective...

The Beyonder ability to directly catalyze plants to unleash their full life force has vast imaginative possibilities. Unfortunately, a Harvest Priest's direct combat ability is limited. If Lugano were a Sealed Artifact and I were to use it, things would be completely different...

Amid these thoughts, Lumian looked at Lugano and asked, "Have there been any enhancements to your body?"

"There are some, but not many," Lugano replied honestly.

Lumian nodded and pulled out a letter from his pocket sent along with Hisoka's Sealed Artifact from Madam Magician, reading it with the aid of the bright white light orb floating above his head.

"Temporarily named: Devil's Whisper.

"Positive effects:

"1. Devil's Arm:

"To minimize the negative effects and make it easy to use, the Beyonder ability of this bone ring is reduced. Originally Devil Transformation targets the entire body, it now only affects the arm wearing Devil's Whisper.

"It causes the arm to swell, darken, and sprout sinister patterns, as if covered with a thick layer of armor. The flesh becomes highly elastic and resistant, minimizing damage.

"The arm in question becomes immune to most poisons, resistant to curses and fire to a certain degree, and significantly stronger.

"2. Malice Perception:

"For the same reason, Malice Perception granted by this ring only helps you sense whether people around you bear ill will towards you, not to detect looming dangers. Make do with it.

"3. Desire Incarnation:

"This is a power I specifically requested the Artisan to emphasize, sacrificing the chance to obtain other powerful effects. Moreover, to ensure its full manifestation, I agreed to slightly increase the rings negative effects.

"It can transform your body into a shadowy black liquid composed of various emotions and desires, helping you avoid damage, conceal your movements, and affect your enemies.

"This sounds quite useful, but is it worth my special request to the Artisan? You'll understand why once you use it."

Upon reading this, Lumian muttered to himself, 'So, by suppressing the reduced negative impacts of the first two positive effects, some of the impact has returned in the Desire Incarnation ability? What makes it so special for Madam Magician to do this?'

Lumian didn't rush to experiment and continued reading.

"4. Wraith Shriek

"By rubbing the demon relief on the ring's face and emitting a loud sound, you can create an effect similar to Wraith Shriek that can rupture the eardrums of living beings and harm their spirits. The closer they are to you, the better the effect.

"Negative effects:

"After wearing it, your malice will become more pronounced. If you can't control yourself and indulge in malice, you'll gradually slip into the Abyss and eventually be controlled by the malice of this ring, meaning, if you indulge in malice while wearing it, you will become its puppet, and it will be the driver, you the driven.

"While it's not that a single indulgence in malice will result in being controlled, it's hard for humans who have tasted the sweet lure of malice not to continue.

"According to my estimates, the conspicuous malice combined with the existing negative effects of the contract ability will negate all your endurance from Ascetic and your own willpower, making you unable to withstand further emotional and desire stimuli.

"Moreover, whether worn or not, just carrying it will cause your body to suffer burns from sulfur flames, both internally and externally. Placing it in the Traveler's Bag can effectively mitigate this effect. As a Pyromaniac who has reached Sequence 5, you can withstand these burns for a longer period, but be mindful of the sulfur's toxic effects and treat it promptly.

"Furthermore, including yourself, people within a hundred meters radius will be subtly influenced by the Devil's Whisper, more prone to ill thoughts and impulsive actions. This can also be mitigated by placing it in the Traveler's Bag."

The rest is okay, but after wearing Devil's Whisper, my emotions and desires will become my greatest weaknesses... Lumian assessed this Sealed Artifact from Hisoka.

Its sealing is relatively simple, requiring only spatial isolation. Combined with Lumian's strong endurance, he could totally use it as a mystical item.

Lumian then pulled out the pitch-black bone ring, wrapped in a dark transparent barrier, from another pocket. He pressed his hand against the sphere and slowly reached inside.

His right hand felt like it was moving through a dense swamp, struggling to touch the ring.

At the same time, the dark sphere silently crumbled, unfolded on its own, and merged with the surrounding void.

Lumian then slipped Devil's Whisper onto his left index finger.

His body suddenly liquefied and became ethereal.

He turned into a pool of thick black liquid. Lugano, who only glanced at him, shivered uncontrollably, chilled to the bone as if he had seen the most sinister and hidden desires and emotions deep within the human heart.

The newly-advanced Harvest Priest impulsively asked Lumian, who had just returned to human form from a black liquid state, "When can we return to the surface?"

Lumian gave him an icy glance, his blue eyes seemingly harboring a darkness that no light could penetrate.

Lugano shuddered violently, a familiar fear creeping back as he stuttered, "J-just asking."

Lumian cracked a slightly mad smile and slowly removed the Devil's Whisper, placing it back into the Traveler's Bag.

He now understood why Madam Magician had specifically requested this ability.

His desires and emotions were not entirely his own!

A smaller part of his emotions and desires stemmed from his fate linked to Termiboros, from the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, and from the bloodline of Omebella. Normally, these would only affect him, but using Desire Incarnation, these emotions and desires could be materialized and thus exert some influence on the outside world and his enemies.

If I were to envelop a Sequence 4 Saint in the Desire Incarnation form, that demigod would likely suffer from the corresponding emotional and desire

corruption... But this method of attack means I'm forgoing evasion to face the backlash head-on, Lumian mused briefly, fairly satisfied with this Sealed Artifact.

Facing a demigod, evasion was sometimes futile-better to fight it out!

And both the Sword of Courage and Devil's Whisper gave him that chance.

When night fully descended, Lumian arrived at the headquarters of the Psychic magazine, located at 19 Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, and met Mr. K in the basement.

Mr. K, wearing a wide hood, warmly said, "Let us pray to the Lord first."

Lumian nodded slightly and closed his eyes.

His thoughts tightly wrapped, not drifting outward.

After a while, he and Mr. K opened their eyes simultaneously.

Mr. K, with a hoarse but fervent voice, said, "Congratulations, you are now a candidate Oracle.

"This is the greatest reward, being closer to the Lord is the greatest reward for us!

"Afterwards, wherever you go, you can contact the local Oracles or members of the Aurora Order, followers of the Lord, to request their help.

"If there are no Saints or Oracles locally, you have the authority to call upon all resources there, including personnel, money, intelligence, and materials."

Is this the Aurora Order's reward, elevating my authority and status? Lumian made the sign of the cross over his chest and said in a hoarse voice, "Praise you for creating all. Praise you for bearing the world's sins!"

Mr. K nodded in satisfaction.

"There are no other rewards for now, let's continue to investigate the matter of the vortex."

"Okay," Lumian quietly breathed a sigh of relief.

If Mr. K had offered material rewards, he would have hesitated to accept them.

It's not that he was worried about the items themselves being marked by that entity; after all, he was already under surveillance, so a little more wouldn't make a difference. His reluctance was more psychological.

Lumian pondered for a moment and then informed Mr. K, "I might be heading to the Southern Continent again soon to wrap up some previous matters, not sure how long I'll need."

"Alright," Mr. K nodded gently, "Which area specifically?"

"Not sure yet," Lumian answered truthfully.

He really didn't know.

Mr. K didn't inquire further.

"We have Saints and Oracles on the Southern Continent, and many followers of the Lord operating secretly there. Once you determine the specific location, I can help you contact the person responsible for that area."

"Thank you, Mr. K," Lumian said, expressing his gratitude.

Mr. K corrected him, "No need for thanks; we are all Oracles now, not being equals is disrespectful to the Lord."

Lumian was momentarily speechless.

He casually asked, "Mr. K, that cathedral you took me to last time, does it have any significant meaning within our Aurora Order?"

Mr. K replied fervently, "That was the first cathedral established by our Aurora Order."

Is it related to Baynfel? Lumian asked a few more indirect questions from different angles, then took his leave.

Returning to Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, he informed Franca and Jenna about the Knight of Swords' request and then activated the black mark on his right shoulder, beginning the teleportation.

He moved between layers of pure color blocks and indescribable bizarre creatures, not knowing how long it took, but he finally arrived at the location indicated in the Knight of Swords's letter.

The first thing that caught Lumian's eyes were several pale-faced men and women, like bodyguards, surrounding the Knight of Swords with somewhat disheveled brown hair, a suppressed look in his eyes, dressed in a white shirt and black vest.

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Chapter 759 Spiritual Intuition

759 Spiritual Intuition

Beside the Knight of Swords lay a boundless lake, its quiet crimson waters shimmering under the moonlight of the night, occasionally stirred by a breeze.

Lumian couldn't help but lift his head to gaze upward, feeling the night sky, hung with a crimson moon, seemed closer and much clearer than usual. Even the stars, obscured by the moonlight, were faintly visible, dense as if forming a brilliant, vast river.

A chilly wind blew past, and Lumian, dressed in a thick jacket, turned his attention back to the Knight of Swords and asked, "Aren't you cold?"

Although it was summer in the Southern Continent, their high altitude and thin air made it feel significantly colder, especially at night, with temperatures likely below 15 degrees Celsius.

Originally gazing at the highland lake, the Knight of Swords turned to Lumian and said, "For me, temperature has lost its meaning, and besides, the cold suits me better."

"Is that so? Then, extreme temperatures over 100 degrees Celsius or close to absolute zero don't affect you?" Lumian replied, his tone relaxed.

The Knight of Swords fell silent, his gaze dark, seemingly suppressing something, before Lumian steered the conversation back on track. "What exactly is the matter?"

Without asking the pale-faced, simply dressed men and women around him to leave, the Knight of Swords spoke in a low voice, "This is the Raklev area of the former Highlands Kingdom. I would like you to help find someone here."

The Highlands Kingdom, known for its mummies across the Northern and Southern Continents? Lumian did not hide his confusion. "What can you not find that I can?"

Having worked together before, Lumian knew that the Knight of Swords, a holder of a Minor Arcana card and a Sequence 5 Wraith of the Prisoner pathway-mainly controlled by the Rose School of Thought with its splinter group, the temperance faction, joining the Church of The Fool-must have his reasons.

Combining this information, Lumian guessed that the Knight of Swords was a member of the temperance faction, representing his faction within the Tarot Club,

also serving Mr. Fool.

Moreover, having seen a temperance faction Angel suspected of being a messenger of Mr. Fool, Lumian knew this organization was not weak, but rather strong, especially in divination, endowed with potent spiritual intuition.

Considering these, if the Knight of Swords truly needed to find a person, it would be simpler to request assistance directly from the temperance faction.

Is he thinking that it's a waste of my promise if it's not used?

Or, like me, do you prefer to rely on your own abilities and the goodwill you've accumulated to complete tasks, as a way to hone yourself?

Ah, it's more likely you're relying on my mystical ability to attract evil god bestowed to locate the target...

While Lumian made these guesses, the Knight of Swords, his voice suppressing his emotions and desires, said, "Someone's spiritual intuition tells her that you can solve our current problem and provide the most effective help."

A Wraith becomes a charlatan after becoming skilled at divination? Lumian thought sarcastically but didn't inquire further. "What do you need me to do?"

The Knight of Swords took a few steps forward.

"Please allow me to introduce myself.

"My name is Maric, the 'Knight of Swords' of the Tarot Club's Minor Arcana, and also a member of the temperance faction of the Church of The Fool.

"You're aware of the origin of the temperance faction aren't you?"

Lumian nodded and pointed at himself. "Lumian Lee."

The Knight of Swords continued, "We are looking for an important member of the Primordial Moon faction within the indulgence faction."

We... Lumian's first reaction was to look around for any companions the Knight of Swords, Maric, might have.

But he found no one.

As for the pale-faced men and women, he didn't use his Eye of Calamity, simply observing their weaknesses and confirming they were all zombies.

Lumian retracted his gaze and frowned.

"The Primordial Moon faction?"

Wasn't the Rose School of Thought only known for the split between the indulgence and temperance factions? Where did the Primordial Moon faction come from?

Hmm, from the series of events involving Hisoka and the Dream Festival, perhaps there was also a Devil faction within the Rose School of Thought...

Is this something learned from the Tamara family? Infinitely divisible...

The Knight of Swords earnestly explained, "The Primordial Moon faction joined the indulgence faction later, originally a branch of the Life School of Thought; they grasp the Apothecary, which is also the Moon pathway. Later, guided by the Primordial Moon, they defected from the Life School of Thought and joined the Rose School of Thought.

Life School of Thought... Lumian's head throbbed.

Why does this keep getting more complicated?

And which secret organization is this now?

Seemingly sensing his thoughts, the Knight of Swords, Maric, spoke succinctly, "The Life School of Thought primarily follows the Fate pathway and is now an ally of the Tarot Club. This matter has nothing to do with our current search."

Lumian nodded, signaling the Knight of Swords to stick to the main issue.

Aurore once said, "Do not add unnecessarily entities; if irrelevant, best leave it be to save energy."

Glancing at the pristine, boundless lake, the Knight of Swords, Maric, said, "The member of the 'Primordial Moon' faction we're looking for possesses a very important item-that is our target."

"How are you so sure they are in, uh, the Raklev area?" Lumian engaged more seriously now.

The Knight of Swords paused for a few seconds before responding, "Two incidents here and some residual traces point to him, but we haven't found him yet. Meanwhile, another event occurred that proves he's still here, possibly right in Raklev City."

"Is he from the Apothecary pathway?" Lumian asked cautiously.

The Knight of Swords gave a slight nod. "Yes."

"Which evil god is their Primordial Moon?" Lumian didn't rush to ask about the incidents and the traces left behind.

The Knight of Swords' expression turned grave for a moment.

"It's likely an incarnation of the Great Mother, sometimes also known as the Mother Tree of Desire."

"The Great Mother..." Lumian's eyelids twitched, "Has the Primordial Moon's important follower received a boon from the Primordial Moon, or should I say, the Great Mother?"

"Possibly." The Knight of Swords wasn't too certain.

A follower of the Great Mother receiving Her blessing would mean they could sense my Child of God lineage within a certain distance... The Knight of Swords hadn't thought of asking for my help before; I had only recently received the lineage of Omebella, and his companion then had a strong spiritual intuition... Are they trying to lure out the target using my Child of God lineage? Lumian's understanding of the situation became instantly clear.

That person's spiritual intuition is spot on!

The Knight of Swords regained his composure.

"That person is named Oxyto, a Sequence 4 Shaman King of the Apothecary pathway, a demigod. Don't worry, we will discreetly provide you with protection."

While speaking, the Minor Arcana card holder bent down to pick up an oil painting from the ground, depicting a handsome young man in his twenties, his skin pale as if he hadn't been exposed to sunlight for a long time, with deep features and slightly curly black hair cascading to his shoulders.

"This is a portrait of Oxyto," the Knight of Swords briefly introduced.

"If there's a boon, the target's current appearance and gender might be uncertain..." Lumian pondered aloud, "Tell me about the incidents that occurred in the Raklev area and the significant traces left behind."

The Knight of Swords pulled out a stack of papers from under his vest and handed them to Lumian, saying, "We first heard from some merchants about several occurrences of a full moon in Raklev City at times it shouldn't appear...

"At the edge of Lake Dalsh, we discovered a buried ritual site where dozens of humans had become nourishment for the earth. Their abdomens had been torn open, and it seemed something had crawled out, but no related traces were found at the scene..."

Hearing this, Lumian suddenly recalled several scenes he had seen in Madame Pualis's castle.

He grimaced as he asked, "Were these humans both men and women?"

"Yes," the Knight of Swords seemed to anticipate his question and added proactively, "The males' abdomens were also torn open."

He then pointed to the stack of papers in Lumian's hands.

"More detailed information is in the documents."

Lumian hummed in acknowledgment, pondering for a moment.

"I might need my companions to assist me, can you protect them too?"

"No problem, as long as you all stay within five kilometers of each other," the Knight of Swords assured.

Lumian smiled.

"Then I'll go back first to study the materials and make some preparations."

...

In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.

After listening to the Knight of Swords' request, Franca scratched her head, puzzled.

"Forget the risk of searching for a demigod for a moment; I think you alone should be able to handle it. There's limited help we can provide, as we don't have the lineage of Omebella."

Anthony, who had been called over, thought for a moment and said, "I could help cover up traces of the investigation, making those questioned forget they were ever asked."

Jenna glanced at Lumian and said, "I think your real purpose isn't to get our help."

Hearing this, Franca realized.

"You want to use this opportunity to train the team? You want to prepare this early?"

"Not too shabby." Lumian chuckled, "The earlier you prepare for these things, the better, in case I'm forced to advance earlier than planned."

Franca thoughtfully said, "Then I'll pass Jenna's messenger summoning method to 007. When there are Mirror People clues, we'll go back to Trier to follow up. And don't forget the most important team member."

"How could I forget?" Lumian laughed.

Ludwig, who was enjoying a late-night snack, saw his godfather enter the room and sit down across the dining table, flashing a smile at him.

Suddenly, the bread in his hands didn't taste as good anymore.

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Chapter 760 Second Day

760 Second Day

In the Southern Continent, Raklev region, the day revealed Lake Dalsh in all its clarity, the serene waters reflecting the azure sky and distant snow-capped mountains in a scene almost dreamlike in its beauty.

Lumian, devoid of any mood to appreciate the scenery, was strolling around a pit at the forest's edge with Ludwig, who was smartly dressed in a tweed blazer, and Lugano, who wore a light cotton coat.

The pit contained highly decayed bodies, half-melted into the surrounding soil as if merging with it, decomposing in a unique way that returned nutrients to the earth.

Seeing this, Lumian understood why Oxyto, a Shaman King, didn't destroy the bodies after his rituals, leaving behind evidence and traces: burying the bodies and allowing them to return to the land was likely part of the ritual!

Last night, after reviewing the documents provided by the Knight of Swords, Lumian had a clearer idea of how to find Oxyto, a fervent disciple of the Primordial Moon.

Clearly, conventional methods like Magic Mirror Divination wouldn't work; otherwise, the Knight of Swords' companion, a member of the temperance faction with sharp spiritual intuition, would have already located Oxyto.

Lumian had three plans:

First, since Oxyto was a member of the Rose School of Thought and often mingled with the indulgence faction, he started by sending Franca and Jenna, both Demonesses, to casually stroll through Raklev City in full regalia, hoping to encounter Oxyto. This Shaman King, who never resisted his desires, might approach them, all under the watchful protection of the temperance faction.

Additionally, Anthony would use Psychological Invisibility or disguise himself as a commoner to follow them and observe the reactions of those around the Demonesses to discern any malice before Oxyto made a move.

Whether or not Oxyto had received the Great Mother's boons and transformed into a woman was a detail that didn't affect the Demonesses' ability to seduce him. Lumian deduced from Madame Pualis's and Franca's experiences that Oxyto would still be attracted to women, and might as well have an interest in men.

Second, using his own lineage from Omebella, and the unique ability of the Great Mother's blessed to sense others within a certain distance, he planned to roam the Raklev area in hopes of drawing out Oxyto. Similarly, Lugano, who also bore an anomaly possibly linked to the Great Mother, would serve as excellent bait.

Third, he considered revisiting the sites Oxyto had been before to see what could be eaten.

Pinching his nose, Lumian carefully inspected the traces around and inside the pit along with the numerous bodies for a while, then turned his head to ask Ludwig, "Is it dirty?"

"Very dirty," Ludwig nodded emphatically.

"Dirty from the Great Mother?" Lumian pressed further.

Ludwig hummed affirmatively, his expression filled with conflict.

Unsurprisingly, he heard his godfather ask, "Is it edible?"

At this question, Lugano couldn't help but gag, while the usually stoic Knight of Swords, Maric, slightly raised his eyebrows.

Ludwig replied reluctantly, "Yes."

"Can you sense the child born from these corpses after eating?" Lumian further inquired.

Based on his experience, these bodies had likely been impregnated during the ritual, carrying rapidly growing clawed bird-like creatures in their wombs, which then tore through their parents' abdomens, absorbing the remnants and emerging on their own.

From a mysticism standpoint, whether voluntarily or forcibly, the clawed bird-like creatures and the corpses shared a deep blood connection, making it easy to trace one from the other, or even cast curses across distances.

However, according to the Knight of Swords' documents, divinations utilizing this blood connection had been fruitless, as if the creatures that had emerged from these corpses had vanished from this world.

This could be due to a high-ranking individual casting a counter-divination or a change in the creatures' state. Lumian's only hope was that Ludwig might glean different information by consuming the flesh.

Ludwig, with a sullen face, said, "You can extract a bit of the bloodline from the corpses through a certain cooking method. While this won't allow me to sense the child's position and condition from a great distance, I should be able to detect its presence within a thirty-meter radius."

"Okay," Lumian felt the results were better than expected.

Then, he watched as Ludwig squatted down and used a child's silver knife and fork to separate a piece of half-melted, half-rotten flesh from one of the corpses.

The flowing yellow pus and the grotesque state of the flesh made Lugano turn away, looking out towards Lake Dalsh and Raklev City on the other side of the water.

Ludwig then had Lumian retrieve a cast-iron skillet, a stand, wheat flour, liqueur, various spices, and a chunk of solidified lard from the Traveler's Bag.

Lumian took on the role of the Chef's assistant, mainly responsible for starting the fire.

Ludwig first melted the lard, then added a bit of liqueur and some spices, frying them until the mixture was richly aromatic.

Next, he wrapped the rotten flesh in wheat flour and tossed it into the skillet, frying it in the deeply colored, fragrant lard.

The odors of fragrance and foul mingled together, gradually spreading.

Finally, Ludwig finished cooking and forked up the fried, golden-brown flour-coated meatball, stuffing it into his mouth.

He chewed, tears seemingly welling up in his eyes, looking pitiful as if wronged.

"You didn't complain when you ate Loki raw," Lumian joked.

Ludwig muttered as he spoke, "Rotten doesn't taste good, and there's no spirituality in it."

After swallowing the fried meatball that looked rather appealing, Ludwig continued thoughtfully as he savored it, "The deceased's birthday is on the second day of every year."

"Is there something special about that?" Lumian asked.

Stuffing candy into his mouth, Ludwig responded offhandedly, "In myths, on the first day, the Oldest One created the world; on the second, the Great Mother was born."

"I've never heard of such a myth..." Lugano murmured to himself, puzzled, with his back to Ludwig.

Lumian, deep in thought, shifted his gaze to another body.

"Their birthdays couldn't all be on the second day of each year, could they?

"I remember that the new year for many tribes on the Southern Continent isn't the same as on the Northern Continent; it's not necessarily January 1st. So, which day is the second day, and which calendar are we using?"

Ludwig, with candy in his mouth, said, "Any would do, as long as it's the second day of the new year according to the calendar one believes in."

Purely symbolic, then... Lumian turned towards the Knight of Swords. "Have you confirmed the identities and birthdays of these bodies?"

Raklev in the Star Highlands was a relatively prosperous area with a significant population, similar to the City of White Rapus, where Lumian had been before. It was one of the ancient Highlands Kingdom's support points ruling over the entire Star Highlands.

This area was known for its rich mines, but interestingly, all mining sites were far from Lake Dalsh, preserving the sanctity of this highland lake in the hearts of its people.

In the past, the Star Highlands were primarily a battleground between the Intis Republic and the Feysac Empire. After the war a few years ago, the Feysac Empire's influence waned, and the Loen Kingdom began to extend its reach. Even the Evernight Goddess Church of Loen Kingdom seemed to be spreading its teachings in this area-a fact Lumian had heard about while in Rapus.

And throughout the Star Highlands, the city atop the mines, Raklev, had the largest Loenese population.

Knight of Swords Maric nodded slowly and said, "We've confirmed 90% of the bodies; their birthdays, according to the Northern Continent's calendar, are mostly on January 2nd. For the rest, using local calendars, their birthdays also fall on the second day of the new year.

"For those whose identities remain uncertain, they seem to be foreigners, who may have come here either voluntarily or involuntarily. Give us a bit more time, and we'll surely determine who they are."

With a sufficiently large sample, the findings mostly align with Ludwig's explanation that the ritual required a strong symbol of the Great Mother... Lumian didn't stop the more temperance faction members from wasting energy verifying the remaining deceased's identities-what if there was something else peculiar?

Looking across the lake at Raklev City, Lumian said, "Let's head back to the city now and walk around."

Let's see which of the three are more effective-Omebella's bloodline, the anomaly of the Earth pathway, or the blood connection with the bird-clawed babies!

Walking towards the city, made of numerous gray and white stone houses, along the shimmering lake as blue as the sky, Lumian suddenly had a thought.

He asked the quiet Knight of Swords walking beside him, "In the Rose School of Thought, was Oxyto in charge of the Raklev area?"

"Not previously, and now it's uncertain," replied the Knight of Swords succinctly.

Lumian nodded, musing to himself, "If he isn't in charge of Raklev and merely initiated a ritual here on a whim, he should have left after it ended. Why is he still here?

"Does he have a deeper purpose in the Raklev area?

"Or perhaps, the Rose School of Thought is planning something for this place?"

The Knight of Swords paused for a few seconds before responding, "We suspect there might be a deeper purpose."

Pausing momentarily, he added, "Before the Highlands Kingdom was established, many areas of the Star Highlands worshiped Death, and Raklev was one of the places most influenced by this belief. Even today, some local customs still carry remnants of this death worship."

As they spoke, the three adults and one child arrived outside Raklev City.

Raklev, compared to the refined City of White Rapus, the architecture here was much more rugged. Although there were people in dark red robes and bright dresses, most wore more durable canvas work clothes.

Before even reaching the city gates, Lumian could already sense the hustle and bustle.

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Chapter 761 The Blessings Festival

761 The Blessings Festival

Beside a segment of the old city wall, now merely a relic for admiration, Lumian's gaze passed between the tall and short gray-white stone buildings and landed on a majestic temple standing near the mountain range.

It towered thirty meters high, made up of several turrets, reminiscent of an ancient war fortress left over from bygone eras.

At this moment, influenced by both the mountains and the clouds, the near-noon sunlight cast a dim hue, cloaking the grand temple in a dusk-like veil.

"Is that a temple of the God of Combat?" Lumian didn't turn his head as he asked the Knight of Swords beside him.

The God of Combat Church was the only state religion of the Feysac Empire, but following their defeat in the war a few years ago, the Evernight Goddess Church had gained a certain right to preach within the empire, although they seemed unenthusiastic about this role.

The Knight of Swords replied succinctly, "It's a cathedral."

Not a temple, but a cathedral? True to the Feysacians, who suffer from a fascination with enormity, and their taste is not bad... For some reason, Lumian suddenly recalled a phrase he had heard at the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society: More is beautiful, bigger is better.

He then asked, "Is this a Feysac colony?"

"Yes," the Knight of Swords replied in a deep voice, "but now, the Loenese have the right to trade here."

Lumian nodded slightly, saying nothing further as he followed the road into Raklev City.

Along the way, it was easy for him to distinguish people from different countries among the crowd:

The Feysacians, tall in stature-men typically over six feet three inches, women nearly six feet-matched Lumian's stereotype of them: descendants of giants, even including many half-giants. Their dressing tended to be casual, with either unbuttoned jackets or no jackets at all;

The Loenese, predominantly with black hair, cared much about their appearance, always impeccably dressed. The ladies favored round-brimmed bonnets and carried sun-blocking parasols, while the gentlemen were decked out in top hats and carried canes;

The locals of Raklev were darker-skinned and wiry. The men often wore durable canvas work clothes, and the women dressed for labor, with only a few in brightly colored dresses, herding cattle, sheep, and horses.

Lumian watched a dwarf horse and several long-haired cattle pass by, spotting a local man in a dark red robe with a stark white skull topped with a wool-knit gray and white hat on his head.

"Is this the remnant of Death worship you mentioned in the local customs?" Lumian didn't choose his path deliberately but followed his instincts.

The Knight of Swords nodded slightly and said, "Yes, the people of Raklev keep the skulls of their deceased relatives at home, believing they protect them, bring good luck, and help fend off dangers lurking in the night. The more skulls a family has, the more prosperous and developed it is considered."

This is similar to the practice in Cordu where relatives' hair and nails are kept... but here, the Death worship is much stronger, hence the choice of skulls, making it more extreme...

Lumian suddenly felt a pang of melancholy.

The Knight of Swords continued, "Some even make amulets from the skulls of their deceased kin to carry with them at all times. What you saw earlier was just such a case.

During the annual Blessing Festival, all the locals in Raklev take the skulls from their homes into the streets, dress them solemnly, and join in the revelry and prayers together."

"Blessing Festival?" Lumian perked up, asking with gravity.

Having experienced Lent, Sea Prayer Festival, and Dream Festival, he felt like he had developed a sort of festival-induced PTSD, with a headache starting whenever he heard of another special day.

Oxyto, a Shaman King of the Rose School of Thought and a key follower of the Primordial Moon, couldn't be staying in Raklev just for the Blessing Festival, could he?

The Knight of Swords responded somberly, "The Blessing Festival has long since passed; it was in November last year, more than a month before the Dream Festival."

You know about the Dream Festival... Lumian first breathed a sigh of relief, then asked anxiously, "Did Oxyto first appear in the Raklev area before or after the Blessing Festival?"

The Knight of Swords thought for a moment before replying, "Before."

"So during the Blessing Festival, he was likely still in the Raklev area?" Lumian furrowed his brow slightly.

"That seems to be the case," the Knight of Swords answered, very cautiously.

...

Franca's gaze drifted away from a local woman with colorful skulls sewn onto her shoulder, and she turned to a tall, blond, blue-eyed woman from Feysac with a smile. "Sorry, I already have a lady companion!"

Isn't this Feysacian a bit too forthright?

Flirting with me and Jenna, and to think, aside from men, there were also beautiful women inviting us over!

The Feysacian chuckled. "I don't mind if you both come over to my place."

"I mind," Jenna spoke up for Franca.

They had been wandering around Raklev City for nearly two hours. Although Franca hadn't actively unleashed the Demoness of Pleasure's charm-to avoid suspicion of fishing purposefully-their carefully styled Demoness appearance alone, in terms of looks, demeanor, and figure, was enough to draw plenty of attention.

Here, the Feysacians were bold and direct, both men and women, while the Loenese were conservative and reserved, only daring to approach after finding a good reason. The locals mostly just watched from a distance, quietly following, with a few gathering the courage to speak up, but only in the guise of offering guidance.

"Alright then." The female Feysacian, a bit taller than Franca, waved her hand in disappointment and turned to enter a nearby café.

Franca and Jenna were now in the heart of Raklev City, on a street that boasted the grand and elegant architectural style typical of Feysac.

"It's almost noon, how about trying some Feysac cuisine?" Franca looked up at the sun, bright but not warm.

She was referring to the St. Millom Restaurant diagonally across from them.

St. Millom was the capital of the Feysac Empire, and naming a restaurant after it seemed an attempt to offer an "authentic" experience.

"Sure." Jenna nodded gently.

As the two Demonesses stepped into the grand and intricately decorated restaurant, Anthony sat down on a bench across the street and quietly started on his lunch-a corn tortilla wrapped around beef and lamb, seasoned with various spices.

...

Lumian walked with Ludwig and Lugano until they reached the temple-like Holy Lake Cathedral.

But once they truly entered the city, the Knight of Swords, Maric, disappeared. However, Lumian's instincts told him that this Minor Arcana card holder was still nearby.

"Feeling anything unusual?" Lumian inquired of Ludwig.

"No," Ludwig shook his head.

Lumian then turned to Lugano. "What about you?"

"Me?" Lugano looked baffled.

Isn't it Ludwig's job to locate people?

What does this have to do with me?

"Do you sense anything unusual?" Lumian calmly repeated the question.

For some reason, Lugano felt that his employer had become more approachable lately, so he honestly replied, "No."

Gurgle, gurgle, a strange noise sounded next to both him and Lumian.

Both turned their gaze to Ludwig.

Touching his stomach, Ludwig looked eager and said, "It's time for lunch."

"Alright," Lumian agreed readily.

His philosophy was to never let a child go hungry, especially since the starving child might resort to cannibalism.

He looked around and pointed towards a bustling street to the northwest of Holy Lake Square. "There seem to be quite a few restaurants there."

This time, Ludwig didn't need Lugano's hand-holding; he scampered ahead with short strides, while Lumian followed at a leisurely pace, and Lugano trailed close behind.

The street bore a very typical Feysac characteristic, complete with trees and benches, resembling a streetscape in the Northern Continent countries.

Lumian glanced around briefly and pointed with his chin to St. Millom Restaurant not far away. "Let's try some Feysac cuisine."

"Okay." Ludwig wiped his mouth.

Suddenly, his eager expression turned to confusion, and his head moved left and right as if searching for something.

Lumian noticed this unusual behavior.

"Why? Want an ice cream too?" he teased Ludwig.

Imitating Lugano's usual demeanor, Ludwig pressed his voice down and said, "I think I sensed that child from the body, but it's vague."

Sensed the bird-clawed baby? Lumian looked around; there were no other children in sight, just Feysacians and locals, with a few from Loen scattered among them.

There weren't even any pregnant women around.

Then, Ludwig added, "I can't sense it anymore."

Had it moved beyond a thirty-meter range? Lumian thoughtfully withdrew his gaze.

If what we had just encountered was related to the bird-clawed baby, then my own Omebella bloodline might have been sensed by the other...

Lumian nodded and smiled at Ludwig. "Let's eat first, nothing's more important than filling our bellies."

"Right!" For the first time, Ludwig felt that the godfather's words resonated deeply with him.

Upon entering St. Millom Restaurant, Lumian immediately noticed Franca and Jenna sitting in a conspicuous spot.

The carefully dressed Demonesses caught Lumian's attention for an extra second.

Meanwhile, he wondered to himself, Is this the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence?

How coincidental for us to choose the same restaurant...

(Reader note: A reasonable development)

Franca and Jenna, noticing his gaze, looked back at him-one with a mouth agape in surprise, the other stifling a laugh.

They quickly composed themselves and turned their attention back to the beet soup in front of them.

With the waiter's guidance, Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano took a seat in the corner.

"Sir, what would you like to order?" The waiter offered a menu designed like a book.

Lumian glanced at it, chose not to browse through, and simply said, "One set of everything but the drinks."

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Chapter 762 The Flirting Showcase

762 The Flirting Showcase

Although limited by the variety of local ingredients, St. Millom Restaurant's menu appeared thick, yet it didn't offer an extensive variety of dishes. However, relatively speaking, a whole book's worth of menu items couldn't possibly be too few-it was enough to make a dozen adults feel stuffed.

The restaurant's waiter was a local, but he spoke fluent Feysacian, Loenese, and Intisian,

completely understanding Lumian's order without any confusion.

He was about to double-check when he saw the customer from Intis bring out a thick stack of gold hoorn.

This was the currency of the Feysac Empire, commonly used in the Raklev area-before teleporting to the Southern Continent that morning, Lumian had specifically gone to a nearby bank to exchange some cash at a higher rate of 4.4 verl d'or for one gold hoorn, but the cash he now produced wasn't his own; it was activity funds provided by the Knight of Swords, Maric.

"All of it?" The waiter, diligent and thorough, made one last inquiry.

"All of it," Lumian confirmed, earning Ludwig's approval.

After a while, dishes like beet soup, red wine beef stew, cream-fried cod, caviar, grilled meat skewers, appetizer salad, thick-cut steaks, and Feysac pies were served one by one.

Ludwig was utterly immersed in a sea of flavors, and Lumian, too, let himself indulge.

As a Sequence 5 Reaper, his appetite was already not small, and similarly, Harvest Priest Lugano, starting as a Planter, was eating more and more.

After nearly filling their stomachs, as Lumian savored the salty, fishy burst of the caviar in his mouth and awaited the arrival of dessert, he pondered over the recent events.

Why did Ludwig just vaguely sense the presence of the bird-clawed baby, and then in the blink of an eye, it vanished?

Could it be that we were exactly thirty meters apart, and just one step further would break the range of perception?

This is too coincidental... If it were arranged, they would have let Ludwig keep sensing it...

If Ludwig could sense the bird-clawed baby, could the baby also sense its 'mother' approaching? Did it detect the deceased 'mother' appearing in an unnatural way and immediately leave the area or hide, severing the connection between them?

This explanation is more reasonable, not reliant on coincidence...

Now the question arises, if it wasn't a coincidence, why did the bird-clawed baby appear on this street?

It couldn't possibly just be passing by and happened to bump into us, right? If it truly is the law of convergence, it's still unclear whether it's due to a bloodline connection or a law of repulsion...

Lumian picked up the napkin that was on his lap, folded it neatly, and stood up, pushing the stack of gold hoorn to Lugano.

"I'll take a walk nearby to see if there's anything worth buying; you take care of Ludwig and remember to pay for the meal."

"Sure," Lugano was happy to remain seated without moving.

Lumian left St. Millom Restaurant with a leisurely gait, taking in all the shops and pedestrians along the street.

There were banks, candy stores, cafés, and shops selling Feysacian imported goods, with no suspicious individuals in sight.

The passersby were mostly Feysacians and Raklev locals, the latter often carrying talismans made from their relatives' skulls-some wore them as hats, others strung them into necklaces, and some sewed them onto their clothing at the shoulder.

It is not apparent who might attract the bird-clawed baby and its associates here, nor which building might harbor something unusual... Lumian pondered as he walked along the street, hoping for a "chance encounter."

Unfortunately, this did not happen.

Finally, he finished his stroll along the street and returned to St. Millom Restaurant.

The two Demonesses leisurely enjoyed a lavish Feysacian meal, their prominent position and striking looks drawing the gaze of everyone who came and went. Some even made a point of passing by their table repeatedly.

Lumian took the opportunity to admire the Demonesses' beauty.

Suddenly, a thought struck him:

Ludwig only sensed the bird-clawed baby near St. Millom Restaurant...

Franca and Jenna were right here in the restaurant...

Could it be that they truly attracted the attention of Oxyto, the Shaman King, who personally brought or sent the bird-clawed baby to track them, looking for an opportunity to strike?

Upon discovering the scent of a deceased 'mother' on Ludwig and sensing my Child of God bloodline, did Oxyto abandon his original plan, temporarily leaving this area or completely hiding?

This logic flows smoothly; there's no issue, but how could the guardian demigod of the temperance faction completely miss Oxyto's presence?

A Shaman King is adept at concocting various magical agents and conducting rituals, perhaps using one to evade normal premonitions and intuitions?

Or could it be some other method?

Lumian quickly reviewed the intelligence provided by the temperance faction about the Shaman King.

His steps slowed, seemingly captivated by the beauty and charm of the two Demonesses, reluctant to look away.

After analyzing the information on the Apothecary pathway up to Sequence 4 Shaman King, Lumian considered that Oxyto might have also received a boon, transitioning to female, and he recalled the information he knew about the Heretic Spellmaster pathway.

In a flash of thought, a term came to mind: Paramita!

(Reader's Note: Sequence 4 of the Villain Pathway (boon) allows you to establish a new small world called "Paramita". In this world, when humans die, their souls return to the earth and roam the wilderness. On special occasions, they can return home, be reborn and emerge from the Mother's womb as human foetuses. Also, this sequence turns you into a woman.)

Paramita exists in its own right, dependent on the land, and its activities cannot be detected from the outside...

Did Oxyto use some application of Paramita to evade the gaze of the temperance faction's demigod and follow Franca and Jenna undetected?

Hmm, were those bird-clawed babies taken into Paramita after they crawled out of their 'mothers'?

With Paramita clearly involving the domain of death, were these 'mothers' dead before the bird-clawed babies tore out?

In that case, from birth, they bear a strong taint of death, seamlessly blending into Paramita...

Just now, Paramita was unfolding, watching Franca and Jenna, waiting to make a move, and upon sensing the presence of the deceased 'mother' and the bloodline of a Child of God,

Paramita immediately retracted, cutting off this close connection?

No wonder Ludwig's sensing of the bird-clawed baby was so vague... it was because it was inside Paramita!

Moreover, the local Skull Blessing Festival clearly reveres death, which can be linked to Paramita... Could Oxyto's deep-seated purpose for coming to the Raklev region be hidden in this?

With his speculation, Lumian approached Franca and Jenna's table with a genuine smile and politely asked in Intisian-like any real Intisian would do,

"May I have the honor of sitting here for a few minutes, beautiful ladies?"

Franca replied in amusement, "Are you also from Intis?"

She knew Lumian's approach wasn't simply to chat her up; he must have another purpose, so she played along very cooperatively.

"Yes, which is why I felt a connection as soon as I saw you," Lumian fully utilized the pickup lines he'd learned from everyday life in Trier.

At a nearby table, several men who were covertly listening in thought simultaneously:

Damn Intisians!

Curse those Intisian playboys!

Jenna's response was natural, tinged with a hint of wariness and surprise. "Are you here in Raklev for travel or business?"

As she spoke, Jenna signaled the waiter, who brought over a chair for Lumian beside their table.

Lumian sat down and said to the two Demonesses, "Your beauty is like something out of a dream. No, even in my dreams, I haven't seen anyone as beautiful as you.

You must have caught many an eye along the way?"

Dammit, these sweet nothings are giving me goosebumps! At this moment, Franca would have preferred if Lumian mocked her.

Of course, she was still secretly pleased; after all, she had heard from Browns Sauron that every Demoness who had transitioned from male would have a bit of narcissism-fond of and proud of her feminine self.

Jenna felt both discomfort and amusement, much like encountering a pretentious drunkard while playing a Witch.

Her acting was good; she showed no oddity and smiled mockingly. "Really? Would you dare to look into my eyes and say that again?"

Seeing the handsome young man genuinely sit beside the beautiful ladies and engage in pleasant conversation, seemingly stirring emotions, the surrounding men lamented, How can they be so superficial, only considering looks? That's how you get deceived!

Lumian laughed, looking into Jenna's eyes and said, "The moment I saw you, I knew what true beauty was."

"..." How can this guy say such things without feeling nauseous? Jenna avoided Lumian's gaze, answering his earlier question, "You know, some gazes make one feel uncomfortable."

"Any gaze more peculiar than others?" Lumian asked with a smile.

Franca, understanding what he was probing for, shook her head. "No."

Lumian nodded pensively.

"The weather here is rather cold; did you feel something similar earlier?"

Franca recalled for a moment, pursed her lips, and said, "It started a bit on Chapin Street and lasted until just before the beet soup was served; the soup was warm and made us no longer feel cold."

Paramita that involves the realm of death made the surroundings feel a bit colder? Lumian said with a smile to Franca, "Perhaps that's the lack of a reliable man's warmth."

Franca's face twitched, and she communicated with Lumian using her eyes and lips.

Please, no more playing the playboy!

As the three conversed, the image of a woman wearing a petite black cap and light golden bun appeared faintly on the surface of a gold-leaf mirror embedded in the wall.

She rested her chin in her hand, her gaze occasionally focused on Lumian and Jenna, then shifting between Lumian and Franca, and assessing Franca and Jenna.

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Chapter 763 Folklore Origins

763 Folklore Origins

Lumian "kept his promise" and sat at the table with the two Demonesses for only a few minutes before politely taking his leave, leaving the nearby men somewhat perplexed and puzzled.

Shouldn't he have seized the opportunity to pursue further?

Could this be the advanced technique of an Intisian playboy and Dandyist?

Walking back to his own table, Lumian saw waiters carrying a towering stack of plates, their faces a mix of confusion, shock, and fear as they walked away.

All the dishes on the menu had really been devoured!

The look in their eyes towards Ludwig and Lugano was as if they were staring at monsters who had crawled out of the abyss.

If you knew that two-thirds of those dishes and mains were consumed by Ludwig, and Lugano and I only shared the remaining third, you'd be even more scared, worried you might be eaten too. Well, that worry would be justified... Lumian muttered silently as he sat down.

Before him, Ludwig, and Lugano, there was now a slice of apple cake and a cup of richly flavored ice cream.

Ludwig's face was unmasked in satisfaction, the most fulfilled he had felt in a long time.

This was not only because the Feysacian meals were generous in portion and tasty but also because it didn't hurt Lumian to spend someone else's money.

Lumian pushed his slice of apple cake towards Ludwig and appeared to concentrate as he scooped up the milky ice cream with a spoon and placed it in his mouth.

As he savored the melting frost and the spreading taste of milk, he whispered to himself, "Have any of you noticed anything unusual around Two of Cups and Seven of Cups?"

After a brief silence, a faint, ethereal voice echoed in Lumian's ear.

It was from the Knight of Swords Maric.

"We did notice something, from Chaban Street until you approached St. Millom Restaurant, but only a slight abnormality was detected, and we couldn't pinpoint its origin."

This matches Franca's description and my speculation, confirming each other... The temperance faction's demigod is unable to catch Oxyto even though they have started tracking Franca and Jenna... Can we only wait for Oxyto to make a move? Lumian thought for a few seconds and pulled out a pair of non-prescription, plain gold-rimmed glasses for disguise from his Traveler's Bag, placing them on his nose.

He immediately saw the image of the Knight of Swords dressed in a shirt and vest highlighted in the lenses, then disappearing.

The voice of Maric became clearer.

"We occasionally find such slight abnormalities and corresponding traces too, and that is also one of the main reasons we are sure that Oxyto is still in the Raklev area."

Can Paramita alone achieve this, managing to move undetected under the nose of a demigod with strong spiritual intuition? Lumian, lacking a deep understanding of Paramita, could only speculate based on his past experiences.

He had entered Paramita more than once!

In Cordu, whether in reality or in dreams, he had entered Paramita several times, but at that time, without high-level forces involved, he couldn't judge the normal state of Paramita and whether it could deceive a demigod's senses and intuition when it unfolded; In Trier, during the Tree of Shadow catastrophe, he was involuntarily drawn into Lady Moon's Paramita, which effectively isolated the inside from the outside, preventing Trier's demigods from detecting the growth of the Tree of Shadow and the fighting in that area. It was only through Franca's use of the Judgment card and the unique properties of Madam Judgment that they managed to establish a connection with the outside world, allowing the Tarot Club's demigods to pinpoint and descend into Paramita. At that time, the demigods of Trier were far from Rue Anarchie, unaware of anything hidden there, which could be understood and accepted...

Memories flashed through Lumian's mind, and he always felt that Paramita could not reach the current extent.

When Paramita closed, it was normal that the temperance faction's demigod couldn't sense it even if nearby, but how could it remain undetected after unfolding right under the nose of the temperance faction's demigod?

Is it that powerful?

I think even Lady Moon's Paramita couldn't achieve that, only capable of masking activities and protecting itself through distance from being detected...

Lumian turned his gaze to the window, seeing two locals among the passersby; one had a human skull painted purple hanging on his chest, and the other tied a bleached white human skull on top of his head.

Death worship...

Paramita...

Perhaps, Shaman King Oxyto has developed a special aspect of his Paramita in the Raklev area, which allows him to unfold it in front of a demigod without being detected, at least until there's substantial interaction... Lumian speculated, piecing together Madame Pualis's plan to use the folklore of Cordu to enhance her own Paramita.

Lumian took another spoonful of milky ice cream and lowered his voice again.

"Tell me more about the origins and circumstances of the Skull Blessing Festival."

Knight of Swords Maric replied clearly in his ear, "It dates back to the fall of Death, when the situation on the Southern Continent fundamentally changed.

"The fall of Death caused disturbances in the Underworld, leaving most spirits unable to sense or enter it, forced instead to wander its periphery, between the spirit world and the real world.

"As a result, when sentient beings die, they are very likely to become undead, wraiths, or evil spirits-a grave threat to the living, leading to one disaster after another.

"The response of the Northern Continent nations has been Church-sanctioned purification combined with compulsory cremation. Here, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the God of Combat Church have had notable success with purification, making cremation unnecessary for those who have been purified."

Hearing this, Lumian truly understood and appreciated the various measures taken before and after death, including consoling the dying, purifying the dead, encouraging cremation, and rewarding the discovery of deceased vagrants.

The origins of all these practices was the fall of Death and the subsequent anomalies in the Underworld!

No wonder the old bones in the lower layers of the underground tombs are still bones, not ashes... During the Fourth Epoch, the Underworld hadn't yet been disturbed, and the spirits had a place to return to... Some mysticism knowledge suggests that bodies are prone to transform at the end of the Fourth Epoch during the Pale Disaster, caused by Death's invasion of the Northern Continent. Indeed, it is the legacy of the Pale Disaster; Death perished during that disaster, leading to the anomaly in the Underworld... Lumian suddenly realized, gaining a deeper understanding of certain mysticism knowledge.

The Knight of Swords continued, "The same issues arose on the Southern Continent, but the Balam Empire, home to many Beyonders following the Death pathway, swiftly devised several solutions that quelled the undead outbreaks in certain areas without resorting to mandatory cremation, thus restoring normalcy.

"In other regions, however, due to ongoing independence efforts from countries like Haagenti, Paz, and the Highlands, faith in Death began to wane, leading to a period of rampant undead plagues and a power vacuum. The people in these areas had no choice but to fend for themselves."

Lumian nodded slightly.

"Is the Skull Blessing Festival a solution for the Raklev area?"

"The Skull Blessing Festival is just one manifestation," explained the Knight of Swords simply. "According to records left by the Highlands Kingdom, it appears that the people of Raklev, with the help of a former official from the Balam Empire, established a mini-state for the spirits, allowing the dead to enter and rest there without emerging again.

"However, this isn't the Underworld; it cannot truly offer rest, nor can it completely bind the spirits. They just have to gradually fade away.

"The annual Skull Blessing Festival is a day for the spirits to emerge, revel, and be liberated.

Keeping the skulls of loved ones at home helps to protect the family from any spirits that might stray from this mini-state, preventing them from causing harm."

In essence, they created a rudimentary, localized version of the Underworld for spirits to return to...

A place to return to... The concept of Paramita is similar, where souls return to the earth and wander the wilderness...

Moreover, in Paramita, spirits can return home on special days to enjoy the joy of reunion, much like the Raklev area's Skull Blessing Festival...

The only difference is that here, the spirits have no path to rebirth; they can only slowly fade away... Lumian compared the local state for the deceased to Paramita and grasped something subtle.

He recalled something Louis Lund once relayed from Madame Pualis: What's been established is merely a small, caricature Paramita, a part of the complete Paramita...

Hmm... Lumian inhaled sharply, muttering under his breath, "Could Oxyto be planning to merge this local spirit realm into his own Paramita, to make it more complete?

"Has he, no, she already partially succeeded, which is why you haven't detected her?"

Knight of Swords Maric paused for a moment before responding, "It's a possibility."

After a brief pause, he added proactively, "We also haven't seen that spirit realm."

Seen... Lumian was initially startled but then understood what the Knight of Swords meant.

The Prisoner pathway could directly turn into wraiths, and they should have been able to see the spirit realm, but they found nothing in Raklev this time.

Lumian didn't respond but considered another issue.

If Oxyto has indeed begun to merge with that mini-spirit realm, she essentially becomes a local version of Death, and she must have sensed the Omebella bloodline in me...

What would her reaction be?

Instant anger, or seeing it as something to be exploited?

Why didn't she act directly? Right, she also used the bird-clawed monster baby to discover that Ludwig nearby had the aura of a corpse 'mother,' adding up to what clearly looked like bait, obviously a trap!

That's why she, accustomed to indulgence, held back. What she needs to do now is, seek assistance?

With that thought, Lumian removed his glasses and abruptly stood up.

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Chapter 764 There's Always a Corruption That Can Be Used

764 There's Always a Corruption That Can Be Used

Lumian took off his glasses and whispered, "The target should have noticed something unusual about me, but Ludwig is right beside me, giving off the 'mother' aura from that corpse. With both of these factors together, the target will surely be highly suspicious and may seek assistance. Be prepared."

If it were just the Omebella bloodline alone, Oxyto might think it was merely the law of convergence at work, bringing the blasphemer of the Child of God into her presence.

Similarly, if it were just the 'mother' aura from the corpse, she might become wary or suspect that the corpse's return to the earth had contaminated the local water, leading to the corruption of certain individuals.

But put together, anyone who could sense these would immediately see there was a big problem.

This couldn't just be a coincidence; there was clearly a dangerous trap!

Knight of Swords Maric's voice seemed to come from farther away.

"We're already ready."

Sensing the hidden danger and preparing even before I thought through everything and issued a reminder? They have strong spiritual intuition and rich experience... Lumian mused as he noticed Lugano, startled by his movements and deep voice, also standing up.

Ludwig wasted no time in pulling the ice cream they had abandoned closer to him and happily ate away, completely unconcerned about what might happen next.

Lumian's gaze swept over Lugano and Ludwig before moving to Franca and Jenna, who were enjoying their dessert.

He was now considering a critical question:

Should they act together, or separate like they did in the morning?

If the earlier speculations were broadly accurate, then the bait phase to lure out Oxyto should already be over. What lay ahead would likely be probing attacks

from the Shaman King and her companions.

In that case, moving together would allow them to better receive protection from the temperance faction, without worrying that Oxyto might strike at a less guarded spot and capture one or two as hostages. But if the attack was fierce enough to force the temperance faction's hidden forces into a defensive position, staying together could lead to total annihilation.

Which choice was safer and more reasonable in this environment was a decision the team leader needed to make.

Lumian walked slowly toward the restaurant's entrance, mentally filtering through the questions and speculations he'd considered earlier.

He thought of his own description of the spirit realm in Raklev:

A rudimentary, localized Underworld.

Underworld... Lumian's eyelids twitched, and he quietly asked again, "Can any of you see or sense the Underworld?"

He was asking whether Zombies and Wraiths could detect the Underworld.

Knight of Swords Maric quickly answered, "No, unless someone directly opens the door to the Underworld or is already from there. Otherwise, it can only be sensed through certain traces.

"Before the Underworld anomaly, it was possible."

It was possible before the Underworld anomaly? Is this inferred from ancient records?

Lumian wasn't particularly concerned about this; instead, he was more interested in something else: If Oxyto has indeed begun integrating the local spirit realm into her Paramita, does that mean her Paramita qualifies as a small-scale Underworld?

Moreover, it had to be a small-scale Underworld that was still bound to this region.

Otherwise, based on Lumian's understanding of Paramita, Oxyto could have easily taken her Paramita away and left the area.

Of course, it's also possible that she hadn't achieved another goal yet.

A small-scale Underworld... Lumian muttered to himself and then walked toward Franca and Jenna, smiling as he said, "I heard Chaban Street is unique to this area. Would you two lovely ladies like to be my guides?"

Chaban Street was where Franca and Jenna had first noticed the temperature drop slightly, indicating that they might have encountered Oxyto there.

In the eyes of the nearby customers, Lumian's invitation was a blatant attempt to arrange a date. However, Franca and Jenna exchanged a glance and understood that Lumian was suggesting they should act together, with Chaban Street as their destination.

"Sure." Franca and Jenna smiled in unison and stood up.

This left those around them somewhat stunned:

Are they that easy to invite?

If I'd known, I would have plucked up the courage to ask!

Together, Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and the others strolled toward Chaban Street, exchanging relaxed remarks about their impressions of the city.

About fifteen minutes later, they reached the street predominantly occupied by locals.

Gray-white stone houses stood in rows, appearing rugged yet solid. Outside each house, strips of wool hung, adding a vibrant, exotic touch that distinguished it from the Star Highlands.

Compared to other streets in Raklev City, the locals here were more likely to wear traditional clothing: dark red woolen robes for men and brightly colored skirts for women.

Similarly, many of them carried skull amulets of various designs, some mottled and brown with wool wigs, some painted purple, green, and red, and some holding caramel-colored tobacco from East Balam between their teeth. Others appeared as white as jade, with dark eye sockets and insects crawling in and out.

Standing at the entrance to Chaban Street, Lumian paused instead of moving forward, signaling Franca and Jenna to stay slightly behind him.

He then took something out of his Traveler's Bag.

It was a golden mask, with the area around the eyes and the face painted in either black or white.

It was an Eggers family mask crafted by Death Himself!

Since this pure gold mask was initially designed to help the living sense and enter the Underworld and was directly created by the deity who ruled over death and the Underworld, wearing it might reveal something related to the Underworld within a certain range. In the Raklev region, the local spirit realm was akin to a small, rudimentary Underworld.

If the local spirit realm had really been integrated into Oxyto's Paramita, seeing it would be equivalent to seeing that Paramita, revealing Shaman King Oxyto!

Without hesitation, Lumian donned the golden Eggers family mask.

His breath rapidly cooled, becoming increasingly still. His body went cold in an instant, losing the sensation of life, and his blood ceased to flow.

Through the golden mask, Lumian noticed the surroundings dimming slightly, with the colors fading and the temperature dropping a little.

Apart from that, everything appeared normal.

So, this is the world through the eyes of the undead? I can't see any trace of that spirit realm... Is it hidden deeper due to being integrated into Paramita? Hmm, I can sense the spirit world directly but can't detect the Underworld... No wonder one has to wait for an opportunity to enter the Underworld instead of simply locating it and teleporting there after wearing the Eggers family mask... Lumian muttered silently, not giving up on his original theory, and tried to stimulate the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor.

The purpose of activating Alista Tudor's lingering aura was to highlight the seal left by the Underworld Daoist.

This powerful being from Franca's world was clearly related to the pathways of Death, Darkness, and Warrior. According to Madam Magician, He might have also had contact with the deranged Death and made some agreements. His seals could potentially enhance the Eggers family's masks.

As a slight pain pricked his right palm and the cold, rotten sensation spread, Lumian's vision abruptly changed.

Along the entire Chaban Street, the fabric strips hanging from the walls lost their color and turned gray, while the people walking there became inexplicably blurry, as if shrouded in thick fog.

However, the skull amulets they wore remained unusually clear, their colors even more vivid by contrast.

Lumian also saw pale or dark red flames ignite in the hollow sockets of those human skulls, flickering and exuding an eerie chill of death.

In that instant, Lumian realized he was "seeing" the spirit realm of Raklev.

It overlapped with the entire Raklev area, where spirits wandered in the shadows while humans lived openly.

Standing on the edge of the spirit realm, Lumian didn't attempt to step inside but instead searched from a distance for any signs of Paramita's presence.

He saw a vast black cloud hanging over the sky in the direction of Lake Dalsh, saw some skulls floating mid-air on the streets with ghostly child-like figures flickering within their burning sockets, and saw how the wilderness below the

mountains seemed to have encroached directly, blending into the city seamlessly.

As expected... Lumian immediately had a clear realization:

Oxyto is inside this Paramita, which has merged with the spirit realm!

With this understanding, the first thought that flashed through Lumian's mind was: My mission ends here. Next, I'll lend the Eggers family's golden mask to the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction, leaving them to organize their forces to enter Paramita and fight Oxyto, while we return to Trier to avoid the potential danger.

But on second thought, Lumian realized that wouldn't work.

Because if they only had the Eggers family's golden mask and not the Underworld Daoist's seal, even a Wraith wearing it wouldn't be able to directly "see" Oxyto's mutated Paramita!

A possibility vaguely came to Lumian's mind.

He said in a low voice to the hidden Knight of Swords Maric, "I've found Oxyto's Paramita. First, take the Two of Cups and the others to safety. Then, as Wraiths, attach yourselves to me, and I'll lead all of you into Paramita!"

"Alright." The Knight of Swords somewhat ethereal voice couldn't conceal his joy and malice.

It was directed at Oxyto.

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Chapter 765 Howl

765 Howl

Lumian thought for a moment and then specifically reminded, "Don't forget the Four of Swords."

To be honest, he almost overlooked Anthony's presence, but because he was constantly thinking about what his teammates were doing and how to coordinate with them, he didn't forget entirely.

When he invited the two Demonesses to Chaban Street at St. Millom Restaurant, Lumian didn't think of Anthony right away. It was only when he reached the street that he remembered their teammate. But he couldn't find the Hypnotist, who had used Psychological Invisibility. He could only trust that Anthony, with his rich experience, would realize that once the rest of the team had gathered together, it was clear the next actions weren't suited to splitting up, and he would follow.

Anthony's habits as an information broker combined well with Psychological Invisibility.

After a two-second pause following Lumian's reminder, the Knight of Swords said, "We won't forget."

It seems like you already did... but the temperance faction's demigod shouldn't be affected much by Anthony's Psychological Invisibility, so when sending Franca and Jenna away, they shouldn't really forget about Anthony... If that's the case, one major cause of death for a Hypnotist would definitely be that Psychological Invisibility works too well, causing teammates to forget or overlook them... As Lumian mused to himself, the special Paramita before him suddenly changed.

A deafening crash sounded from Lake Dalsh as gray-white water surged upward like a tsunami, reaching into the air. The wilderness, already intertwined with the city of Raklev, began to dominate. In an instant, it crossed squares and streets, swallowing Lumian, who had not yet reached Chaban Street, while avoiding Franca and the others.

Oxyto, blessed by the Great Mother, seemed to realize she had been exposed.

Her choice was to use the nature of Paramita to temporarily separate the blasphemer of the Child of God from the temperance faction's demigods, then exploit the brief time difference to achieve her desired goal regarding Lumian.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask and transformed into an undead, felt his body grow "heavier," as if cold masses had

taken residence inside him.

In the next second, he saw the indistinct human figures on Chaban Street vanish, along with Franca, Jenna, Ludwig, Lugano, and possibly Anthony behind him. It was as if they were in two separate worlds.

The human skulls in various states became increasingly distinct, their eye sockets burning with pale or dark red flames as they all turned to face Lumian.

At the end of Chaban Street, at the city's edge where it blended more deeply with the wilderness, swaying figures crawled out from unknown places and began walking toward Lumian.

There were rotting long-haired oxen with only a few pieces of pus-oozing flesh left, giant birds with exposed bones flying low, pythons dragging half-melted threads of flesh between their decaying tissues, and monstrous hills made of multiple headless skeletons.

Human skulls from all corners of the city were also swiftly converging on Chaban Street, floating in the air and covering the sky, blocking out the pale, dim, and heatless "sunlight."

Lumian appeared stunned, as if he had encountered something terrifying, or was like an undead creature facing a higher-ranked and more terrifying kindred spirit. For a brief moment, he stood frozen, unable to move.

Just then, a wretched howl, filled with pain, echoed from Lake Dalsh.

The terrifying and piercing sound was like a high-speed spinning drill that bored directly into Lumian's soul. His vision went dark, and he lost consciousness.

When Lumian regained his thoughts and awareness of his body, he found himself midway along Chaban Street, accompanied by the Knight of Swords Maric, who had appeared at some point, dressed in a black vest and white shirt.

All around him, crystalline cold had frozen human skulls of varying states in mid-air, on the ground, and on the surfaces of gray-white stone buildings.

The surreal frozen scene stretched all the way to the wilderness on the outskirts of the city.

In the staggering army of undead creatures, the rotting monsters shed flesh onto the ground, leaving only bones-yellowed, brown, or bleached white. The skeletal remains sank into the soil, and droplets of crimson blood, not their own, oozed from the surface.

Meanwhile, the wraiths and evil spirits swelled like balloons and burst silently, turning into strange dust.

Although Lumian didn't fully understand what was happening, two thoughts sprang to mind: Have they all been cursed?

Even the fleshless bones were cursed to bleed?

With that thought, Lumian couldn't help but raise his right hand and wipe his nose.

He immediately noticed some blackened bloodstains on the back of his hand.

This came from within his body, blood that had long since stopped flowing.

In the banshee's wail just now, not only was his soul wounded, but his undead body seemed to have suffered physical damage too. Some capillaries had ruptured, causing the blackened blood to seep out.

Terrifying... Lumian had roughly figured out what had just happened.

Oxyto screamed from a distance, using the Banshee's Howl enhanced by Paramita, and!

instantly lost consciousness.

Did the temperance faction's demigods attach themselves to me as wraiths before Paramita expanded, pulling me into Paramita right away? Then, they took over my body and used their abilities to deal with the swarming army of human skulls and undead?

The Knight of Swords also attached himself to me, which is why he's now in Paramita?

After grasping the recent encounter, Lumian had a clearer and more accurate understanding of the terror of demigods: Oxyto isn't even a full Angel but just a Banshee's Howl knocked me unconscious, robbing me of my ability to fight. It took me over ten seconds to wake up... Without the presence of temperance faction demigods, those ten seconds would have been more than enough for Oxyto to kill me ten times over...

This isn't something a drawn demigod can compare to. Facing a real demigod, if I don't seize the initiative, I won't even have the chance to draw the Sword of Courage or use Desire Incarnation!

There's no time for the animated shadow to take the damage for me unless I anticipate it in advance...

With these thoughts swirling, Lumian regained control of his body.

Then, he heard the Knight of Swords, Maric, mutter softly, "Oxyto has retreated. She should be near Lake Dalsh.

"We still don't know what kind of help she's seeking."

"Lake Dalsh?" Lumian asked in mild surprise.

That serene, beautiful, sacred lake?

On second thought, it makes sense. All mining operations in the Raklev region have avoided Lake Dalsh, leaving it entirely unpolluted...

The Knight of Swords surveyed the surroundings but didn't immediately dash off into the wilderness toward Lake Dalsh.

He nodded slightly and said, "Lake Dalsh itself is special, connected to the fallen Death. The establishment of this small spirit realm in the Raklev region was made possible due to Lake Dalsh.

"That former Balam Empire official even used an Undying's skull from the Church of Death and, using his Gatekeeper powers, opened a door to the Underworld and fixed it onto the Undying's skull. This prevented it from completely closing too quickly, allowing a bit of the Underworld's aura to leak out."

"The skull of an Undying? Undying can die too?" Lumian instinctively asked.

The Knight of Swords started walking towards the edge of the frozen world.

He glanced at Lumian and said, "An Undying is only Sequence 4 in the Death pathway. They can still die if killed."

I see... Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly.

The Knight of Swords continued, "The aura leaking from the Underworld, the unique traits of the Undying's skull, and the special nature of Lake Dalsh all worked together to sustain this spirit realm, drawing the souls of dead creatures in the region and letting them gradually wither away."

After listening, Lumian froze for a moment.

"You seem to know a lot about the local spirit realm..."

The Knight of Swords replied, "The Rose School of Thought ruled here for over a thousand years. Apart from the uniqueness of Lake Dalsh, everything else was long understood."

"Then why didn't you say so earlier?" Lumian blurted out.

If you'd told me sooner, I might have guessed Oxyto's intentions earlier!

"We didn't initially connect Oxyto to the spirit realm, so that intelligence wasn't included in the information," explained the Knight of Swords. "After that, I answered whenever you asked, but didn't elaborate. Speaking is also a desire that requires temperance."

"..." Lumian suddenly understood how Franca felt every time she heard him say, "I'll have to start with the events at the Samaritan Women's Spring, where Madame

Hela and 1..."

While talking, he and Maric reached the edge of the city, where the frozen world met the desolate wilderness.

Lumian instinctively glanced at the thick layer of ice encasing the gray-white buildings.

Using the reflective surface, he was astonished to see a blurry figure in each of his eyes.

One wore a small black bonnet and a court dress of the same color; the other had no head and was dressed in a dark, intricately patterned, sinister gown.

Lumian then noticed translucent-ringed insects crawling in and out of his mouth, yet he felt nothing.

...

At the entrance to Chaban Street, Franca, Jenna, and the others felt a sudden chill engulf them and saw Lumian vanish before their eyes.

Before they could communicate or react, a voice, slightly magnetic and ethereal like a dream, echoed in their ears: "I'll send you back to Trier first."

Franca, Jenna, and Lugano instinctively turned their bodies and discovered that a young-looking man had appeared next to them at some point.

He wore a white shirt, draped in a thin black trench coat. With black hair and green eyes, he had a night-like, handsome quality, and wore a pair of red gloves on both hands.

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Chapter 766 Early Labor

766 Early Labor

Gazing at the young man wearing red gloves, Franca cautiously asked, "Who might you be?"

She wasn't about to trust a stranger just because of what he said unless influenced by some Beyonder power.

"Two of Cups, Seven of Cups. You don't need to be involved in what's coming next," said the young man in red gloves directly, calling Franca and Jenna by their Minor Arcana names.

His voice carried the natural authority of someone used to leading many people, instilling a faint sense of fear in Franca and the others.

He knows our Tarot Club codenames... A member of the Tarot Club? One of the Knight of Swords' helpers? His outfit looks like those "Red Gloves" from the Church of Evernight Goddess... As Franca pondered, she didn't sense any warning from her spiritual intuition.

Before she could respond, the young man in red gloves pulled out a tarot card.

The card's front depicted a goddess pouring holy water under a sky full of stars.

Major Arcana, The Star!

So, it's Mr. Star... Franca and Jenna hesitated no longer and nodded in unison, saying, "Okay."

Lugano stood there, a bit dazed.

Why did he take out a card?

I think I've heard of something like this, but I can't remember...

Almost simultaneously, Anthony appeared out of nowhere and squeezed in beside Franca and Jenna.

Franca was startled for a moment, muttering to herself, "I really did forget about you..."

Mr. Star didn't say much more. He opened his mouth slightly.

In an instant, Franca and the others were enveloped by a vast, invisible spirit, and then they ascended into the layered, colorful spirit world, like they were traveling in a hot air balloon.

...

Along the city's periphery, covered in crystalline ice, Lumian, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, withdrew his gaze.

He could roughly guess that the blurry figures in his eyes were the temperance faction's demigods responsible for this operation. One of them, headless, seemed to resemble the temperance faction's Angel he had seen before. The translucent insects crawling in and out of his mouth were likely helpers invited by the temperance faction.

How many people have taken residence in my body just now? Lumian grumbled internally as he followed the Knight of Swords, Maric, in a mad dash.

They entered the wilderness outside Raklev under the pale, cold "sunlight," heading swiftly toward Lake Dalsh.

Due to the unique influence of Paramita, Lumian couldn't teleport anywhere beyond his line of sight. He had to use a visual lock to establish a position, which made it challenging to appear instantly at the edge of Lake Dalsh.

After running some distance, he reached out and grabbed the Knight of Swords' shoulder.

Almost simultaneously, blazing white flames surged from within him, instantly covering his entire body.

The Knight of Swords understood his intent without asking and promptly dematerialized into a wraith, attaching himself to Lumian.

Lumian transformed into a white-hot spear and shot off into the distance in a brilliant display.

The flaming spear streaked through the sky, crossing vast distances to arrive at the edge of Lake Dalsh in no time.

As Lumian detached from the blazing white spear, he noticed that even in Paramita, intertwined with the spirit realm, this lake remained tranquil, clear, sacred, and beautiful.

In the dim surroundings, the gray-white water seemed weightless, stretching upwards like a giant curtain, perhaps drawn to some high-altitude entity.

In front of the water curtain, countless human skulls formed a mountainous head.

Among the skulls of various colors, one stood out the most. It was at the very top, crystal clear as if carved from crystal, and significantly larger than a normal human skull.

Instead of pale or dark red flames, the eye sockets of this crystal skull reflected a mysterious, intricately patterned, ancient bronze door.

The door was slightly ajar, revealing endless darkness within. In that darkness were countless indescribable eyes, staring out yet unable to emerge.

Along the edges of the bronze door, strange, grotesque, and sometimes revolting hands grasped the frame as if trying to squeeze through but unable to. They only managed to scratch out piercing noises that seemed to tear at the human eardrum.

Many spirits and human skulls were drawn to this place, gradually becoming part of the massive head.

Is that crystal skull the Undying's skull used back then? Is the bronze door in its eye sockets the Death Sequence 5's Gatekeeper's door to the Underworld? Hmm, a Sequence 5 can't keep the Underworld door open for long, so they used the Undying's skull and the unique properties of Lake Dalsh to fix it... But where has Oxyto, the Shaman King, gone? As this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he saw the countless human skulls forming the massive head in the air open and close their bony teeth, speaking in unison in various voices: "Why couldn't you give me a little more time?

"If I can't have it, I'll destroy this place and see how many of you can survive the calamity of this collapsing Paramita!

"And I have already abandoned this place and left the Raklev region using my prior preparations!

"Hahaha, hahaha!"

Amid the sharp, hoarse, old, and deep laughter of the human skulls, Lumian felt the massive shadow in the sky descend toward his head. Cracks appeared in the ground below, growing deeper and revealing a dark void.

All the skulls, including the crystal one, developed tiny cracks, seemingly ready to shatter completely in no time.

At that moment, Lumian felt a chill leave his body, and all the skulls stopped cracking as if temporarily held back by an invisible external force.

This also halted the process of Paramita's collapse and destruction. Although it didn't reverse, it wasn't going to happen immediately.

Is this the temperance faction's demigod or their invited helper using their ability? It seems Oxyto really escaped. After testing the waters with the Banshee's Howl, she decisively abandoned this Paramita, clearly stronger than other Madames, and

used her prior arrangements and the unique properties of this place to escape before the temperance faction could act... A series of thoughts flashed through Lumian's mind as he took in the scene before him.

An ancient voice suddenly echoed in his ears: "Don't just listen to what Oxyto says.

"In my experience, anyone who leaves behind so many words before running away is either already insane or trying to cover up something.

"Oxyto did indeed flee here decisively before we locked onto her and planned to destroy this Paramita, but why would she tell us her objectives? Purely to vent her emotions?

"That may be one reason, but there should be a more important one: she wants us to focus on the collapse and destruction of this Paramita and overlook something else."

Lumian hadn't entirely dismissed his doubts after Oxyto's proclamations through those human skulls, but such behavior wasn't unusual for the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought.

Those accustomed to indulgence were always eager to express their emotions.

The ancient voice finally said, "Time will provide us the answer."

As soon as these words fell, Lumian saw the insects with translucent rings flying out.

Suddenly, everything around him slowed down.

A grayish-white fog settled over everything Lumian saw, making it all look surreal.

Soon after, everything projected on the foggy "curtain" started to rewind. The human skulls were no longer cracked in countless places, the ground returned to smoothness, and the thick shadows receded into the sky.

Time wasn't moving backward; rather, recent history and events were being displayed.

Lumian then saw a pair of brown wings that could blot out the sky, leaving the current shadow behind.

Between the wings, each feather as large as a human head, stood a female figure with an exposed abdomen.

The woman was as beautiful as the moon at night, her face radiating maternal brilliance, but her hands and feet were arched, with sharp nails that gleamed coldly.

This was the Shaman King, Oxyto.

Having seen her male form, Lumian recognized her instantly. Her features were softer now, and her facial details were more delicate.

Her belly was swollen, stretched taut with black veins visible on the surface. The skin was so thin that it was almost transparent, revealing the merging forms of numerous bird-clawed monster infants inside.

She... stuffed all those corpse-born bird-clawed infants into her belly... What kind of monster is she nurturing? No wonder the bloodline connection didn't work directly, only indirectly within a certain range... As Lumian came to this realization, Oxyto reached for her belly in the scene from the past.

With a tearing sound, she ripped her abdomen open, blood pouring out.

Oxyto forcefully pulled out an infant slightly smaller than Ludwig. Its skin was pale, its flesh decayed, and remnants of four or five heads and seven or eight bird claws remained on its surface. A pure, clear membrane, seemingly from Lake Dalsh, covered the baby's body.

Oxyto let out a cry of agony as she threw the infant into the eye socket of the crystal skull.

The rotten, multi-headed infant was clearly much larger than the eye socket and the bronze door within it, yet it mysteriously shrank smaller and smaller until it squeezed through a gap barely wide enough for a hand, disappearing into the boundless darkness behind the door.

Is Oxyto's ultimate goal to send that monster infant into the Underworld, making some terrifying thing a reality? And now she's been forced into early labor? As Lumian had this thought, he realized the coldness inside him had vanished.

The figure in the small black bonnet and the Knight of Swords in the vest and shirt simultaneously appeared in front of the crystal skull.

But they seemed unable to pass through the crack in the bronze door and were trying to open it a little more.

The Underworld... Wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, Lumian felt a stirring inside.

Seizing the opportunity provided by the temperance faction demigods stalling Paramita's collapse, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting to the front of the crystal skull.

In his eyes, the bronze door loomed abnormally large.

He stretched out both hands and pressed them on either side of the bronze door.

A hollow, muffled buzzing filled the air as the bronze door opened a little wider.

Lumian immediately felt a terrifying suction, and with a swish, he was pulled through the crack, flung deep into the darkness.

Inside him, two more cold masses joined him.

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Chapter 767 Underworld

767 Underworld

With Lumian vanishing before the crystal skull, the human skulls, already covered in countless cracks, lost their support.

They shattered with a thunderous crash, bringing down the shadows from above and splitting the grassy wilderness into fragments.

Oxyto's Paramita crumbled toward the cracked crystal skull, and everything there silently turned to dust.

The spirits dissipated, the light vanished, and the void of darkness swallowed everything.

No one knew how much time had passed before a gentle light began to glow in the absolute blackness, revealing a barren, dim, pale, and almost frozen wilderness.

In the center of the wasteland lay the tranquil and sacred Lake Dalsh.

The headless lady, draped in a dark-black dress and carrying four heads, swiftly appeared beside the lake, quietly gazing at its serene, transparent surface.

...

As soon as Lumian was pulled through the bronze door, he felt countless eyes upon him, chilling his body further and numbing him.

Meanwhile, arms of unknown origin reached out, grabbing at his head, neck, torso, and legs.

Some had dull skin with white, bony teeth; others were so decayed that their flesh was falling off, slowly wriggling with equally decayed worms; some lacked skin altogether; others were merely illusory Spirit Bodies...

What they all shared was a bone-chilling cold that could freeze the soul.

On Lumian's face, the golden mask painted with black and white oil sparkled with a faint yet pure light. The reaching arms halted momentarily before retracting.

The eyes watching him from the darkness also withdrew their gaze.

Lumian regained his thoughts and his sense of his body.

Below him, he discovered a deep pit with no visible bottom or boundaries.

The edge of the pit was made up of layers of blurry worlds, spiraling downward to the limits of his vision.

These jumbled worlds layered atop each other, and Lumian couldn't make out what lay within them, only knowing that each was vaster than the Star Highlands, with all previous watching eyes stemming from the pit's bottomless dark.

Lumian plummeted suddenly, falling into one of these blurry worlds in the blink of an eye.

Miraculously, he stood on a barren wilderness exposed with gray-white rocks, surrounded by heaps of bleached bones, densely packed and stretching toward various distant places.

At this moment, these bones lay still, as if slumbering through time.

Is this the Underworld? I wonder where the Abscessed Hand's body part might be. Lumian looked around, muttering to himself in silence.

(Amonoculus' note: It is the contracted creature that gave him the traverse the Spirit World. Lumian must find its body parts or else he cannot achieve godhood. According to Fors, one of the body parts is located in the Underworld.)

It was the chance to enter the Underworld that had prompted him to help voluntarily, using the Eggers family's golden mask and the Underworld Daoist's seal to push open the bronze door inside the crystal skull.

Now, the problem was that the Underworld was much more vast than he had anticipated, and he had no idea where to start looking.

Similarly, the whereabouts and intentions of the decaying infant that Oxyto had sent were unknown.

Perhaps I could rely on the contract I had signed with the Abscessed Hand. Essentially being part of the same body, they are mystically connected. The contract I had signed is, to some extent, also with the rest of its body... Lumian quickly formulated a plan and spoke in a cold, hoarse voice, "Knight of Swords, have all of you entered as well?"

"Yes," came the faint voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric.

Pausing momentarily, he added, "A companion of mine has also entered."

Lumian nodded. "Why aren't both of you coming out? You are now in a wraith state, so there's no need to worry about dying instantly in the Underworld."

You're essentially undead beings now; what's there to fear about the Underworld's unique conditions?

The Knight of Swords responded, "But we are fundamentally still living beings. If we stay in the Underworld as wraiths for too long, we won't be able to revert to human form and will forever exist as wraiths or evil spirits. By using your body, we can temporarily avoid the influence of the Underworld, emerging only when it's crucial."

"I see..." Lumian looked up at the pale, dim sky, "I also can't wear this Eggers family's mask for too long. We have about three hours."

As he spoke, Lumian tried to activate without using the black mark on his right shoulder, which was the Abscessed Hand's Spirit World Traversal ability.

With this mark, he faintly sensed something at the end of the wilderness on his right calling to him.

Is that the body part of the Abscessed Hand in the Underworld? Just as Lumian had this thought, a figure appeared ahead.

It was an extremely delicate-looking young woman with an unnaturally pale complexion. Her deep blue eyes were profound and devoid of any emotional fluctuation; her light golden hair was tied in astern bun adorned with a small black bonnet with a fine black veil, and she wore a complicated, exquisite black Gothic court dress.

Is this the temperance faction demigod that was attached to me earlier? Lumian recalled the two blurry figures he saw through the crystalline ice.

One of them matched the lady before him perfectly!

The temperance faction's demigod floated in mid-air, slowly turned around, and then pointed in a direction, nodding at Lumian.

She was pointing toward the end of the wilderness on the right.

"Do you mean that Oxyto's prematurely born, decayed child might be over there?" Lumian asked for confirmation.

The lady in the black bonnet nodded gently in affirmation.

She then vanished into thin air, and Lumian felt another chill inside him.

It's all in that direction, huh... A coincidence? No, not a coincidence, it's more likely that something in that direction is drawing them there... Lumian turned his body, ready to teleport to the edge of his vision.

As soon as Lumian started to become transparent, his body was suddenly grabbed by pale hands that appeared out of nowhere, seizing his arms.

Lumian felt a paralyzing sensation throughout his body, as if his soul was being torn apart by an invisible force.

This time, the faint glow from the golden mask had no effect.

Lumian attempted to ignite a blazing white flame to ward off the cold, stiffness, and numbness, but he was overwhelmed by an invisible terror, trembling uncontrollably, unable to respond effectively.

When he regained his clarity and composure, he found himself still standing in the same spot, but surrounding layers of bleached bones had all risen up, encircling him as if to protect him.

At the same time, Lumian heard the voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric: "Once you put on the Eggers family's mask and become a pure undead being, you will also possess all the traits of an undead, one of which is being suppressed by higher beings of the Death pathway, making it difficult to resist and your body and mind willing to accept enslavement.

"In contrast, we wraiths, who aren't pure and can switch states freely, are less affected."

Was this why I couldn't resist just now? I wonder if the Sword of Courage can counteract this effect. It theoretically should... Lumian realized with a start. "Did both of you save me just now?"

The Knight of Swords didn't continue on this topic but instead reminded Lumian, "It seems that in the Underworld, you can teleport but not teleport freely, as that is considered a desecration of Death and attracts the punishment of the Underworld" According to the mystic knowledge mentioned by Madam Magician, teleporting should be normal in the Underworld since it stems from the spirit world, but considering it as desecration of Death seems a bit too strict, typical of the oppression by higher-ranking beings of the Death pathway... Lumian pondered for a few seconds, slightly bending his back.

A blazing white, radiant spear of flame immediately shot forth, illuminating the pale, dim half-sky, casting towards the far reaches of the wilderness.

As the white and red trail of the flame spear disappeared inch by inch, Lumian, transformed into the spear, hurled himself forward at the fastest speed he could achieve.

During this process, he noticed the wilderness sloped downwards, and the destination he, the Knight of Swords, and the temperance faction demigod aimed for was at the bottom of this 'hillside'.

After a while, the blazing white light scattered in all directions, and Lumian, now clad in a thick jacket, descended toward the ground.

Ahead of him lay a wide, surreal black river, so vast he couldn't see the other side.

The river flowed silently from the edge of the sky to its limits, exceptionally quiet.

"Is this the River Styx?" Lumian inquired of the temperance faction demigod within him.

Responding to Lumian was still the Knight of Swords, Maric: "It should be. It spans every layer of the Underworld. Crossing it is like entering the depths of the Underworld. If you hadn't stopped earlier and ended up flying above it, you would have fallen straight into the river, and no one would have been able to pull you out."

Good thing the issue with teleporting just now gave me a warning: it's best to pause in uncertain environments... Lumian glanced left and right, noticing the wilderness was dotted with withered blood flowers, each concealing a multitude of corpses, bones, and shadows.

"How do I cross?" Lumian sensed that the missing part of the Abscessed Hand's body was on the other side of the River Styx.

No sooner had he asked, and before the Knight of Swords could respond, a dilapidated, gloomy black boat suddenly appeared on the shadowy river.

A figure draped in fragments stood on the boat, rowing with a long oar, guiding the vessel to Lumian's side before stopping at the river's edge.

Peering closely, Lumian saw that the ferryman was a severely decayed male corpse. Large portions of his body were exposed, and his eyes appeared gouged out, leaving hollow sockets entwined with thick blood vessels oozing yellow pus.

"Take this boat across?" Lumian asked, lowering his voice to consult the temperance faction member inside him.

Knight of Swords Maric replied in an ethereal but slightly grave tone, "It's the only way... But be careful of the boatman. The Underworld has mutated, and it could be affected too."

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Chapter 768 Ferryman

768 Ferryman

Lumian nodded, his right hand naturally falling on the Traveler's Bag.

He then walked over to the dilapidated, gloomy boat, noticing the severely decayed boatman turning aside to make way, as if signaling for him to hurry aboard.

"Can you ferry me across the Styx?" Lumian asked politely in Dutanese.

Given that the former Death hailed from the Southern Continent, Lumian figured that speaking Dutanese might be more readily accepted by "all parties" in the Underworld.

After all, in an environment so rich with the stench of death that a living person couldn't last a second, using mystical languages like ancient Hermes, which could manipulate natural forces, might have unexpected effects. For instance, merely uttering the words "River Styx" could forge a strong connection with the dark, ethereal river before him, possibly causing it to whip up a massive wave and sweep him away.

The boatman, its eye sockets filled with thick blood vessels and oozing yellow pus, faced the river, wide enough that the opposite bank was out of sight, and remained motionless.

It seemed it was answering Lumian with his actions:

Why would you try to communicate with a corpse?

I can't hear you, nor can I make a sound.

It seems ordinary language won't do... I've heard that the Death pathway includes a Language of the Dead, but unfortunately, I don't speak it... Lumian muttered to himself quietly as he let his eyes take on a silver-black hue and slowly stepped onto the rickety, gloomy boat.

In his Eye of Calamity, the boatman's destiny was pure black, dead and void, showing no signs of change.

Does this mean no matter how much the boatman struggles, it can't change its status as a corpse, and its only fate is to wither away with time until even its existence vanishes?

But that doesn't mean the boatman can't do anything during this time before its demise. Its actions can still affect the fates of others, including mine and other undead beings. From this perspective, the boatman, or rather the summoned undead, should still have a destiny, only that the outcome cannot be changed...

Indeed, they have destinies, but my current rank isn't high enough to see them, is it? After all, objects have destinies too, but I can't see them now...

It might also be that the destinies of the dead need to interact with others to manifest in the destinies of those others...

Perhaps because he had temporarily become an undead himself, Lumian couldn't help but ponder the destinies of these "residents" of the Underworld.

With the mystical knowledge he currently possessed, he couldn't define destiny precisely, nor did he know how much the mercury river of fate encompassed, or whether there were unseen aspects or hidden parts he wasn't aware of yet.

He felt there must be, which stemmed from a few simple questions:

Could it be that by donning the Eggers family's golden mask and becoming an undead, the river of fate that still existed for me simply disappears, turning utterly black and void?

And when I take off the mask, does the river of fate instantly return?

What then is the river of fate? A plaything at our disposal?

Although the golden mask of the Eggers family was made by Death, it didn't contain Beyonder characteristics and was only of a higher rank.

It surely wasn't simple enough to manipulate the river of fate so easily!

Later on, if there's a chance, I should have a Monster pathway Beyonder observe my fate to see the changes before and after donning the golden mask...

Uh... never mind, unless I find a demigod-level Monster pathway Beyonder, otherwise it would only harm them. Even when I had only Mr. Fool's seal, the false angelic rank, and the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, the patrol team's 'machine' Kolobo from Port Pylos was already too afraid to look at me, thinking it would bring him great danger. Now, I have also added the Underworld Daoist's seal and Omebella's bloodline...

Lumian positioned himself at the center of the battered boat, allowing the golden mask to turn his eyes iron-black.

He wanted to preemptively spot the boatman's weaknesses to prepare for any potential mishaps.

At that moment, the highly decayed boatman began to row, slowly steering the dark boat towards the other side of the surreal, shadowy river.

His body was entirely cloaked in dark colors, and Lumian struggled to find any sign of a vulnerable pale spot amid the black.

Of course, these dark colors also meant that the boatman was completely vulnerable to sunlight and lightning.

The next second, Knight of Swords Maric's voice rang in Lumian's ears: "Its weaknesses might not be here."

Not here? What do you mean they're not here? Can weaknesses be separated from the person? Just as Lumian was filled with intense curiosity, he remembered several stories his sister had once told him.

In those stories, a type of monster called a lich would create phylacteries and hide them in heavily protected, secret places. As long as the phylacteries were not found and destroyed, the lich would not truly die, effectively separating its fatal weakness from itself.

(Amonoculus' note: phylactery ┌□□ either of two small square leather boxes containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages and traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head by observant Jewish men and especially adherents of Orthodox Judaism during morning weekday prayers.)

And in the twenty-two paths of the divine, such things were hardly surprising.

The Knight of Swords continued, "Were you trying to discern its fate earlier?"

"It holds a considerable rank; this is a dangerous endeavor."

A considerable rank? Lumian glanced at the boatman, draped in tattered clothes and highly decayed flesh, unable to see anything particularly formidable about it.

However, the fact that it could ferry across the River Styx without sinking into it certainly suggested something extraordinary.

Lumian diverted his gaze, closely watching the boatman's every move, patiently waiting as the dilapidated boat made its way across the River Styx to the opposite shore.

The battered boat rocked slowly, as if it might fall apart at any moment, taking what felt like an eternity to reach the middle of the river.

Suddenly, the highly decayed boatman raised its long oar and turned toward Lumian.

As the gloomy boat came to a halt, the boatman's mouth abruptly opened, splitting down to its decayed chest, its hollowed-out navel, and further down to its groin.

Its body unfolded like a coat unbuttoning, stretching out to the sides, revealing no darkened organs or bones of its own, but rather a heap of half-melted, decayed limbs.

Once again, Lumian felt a chill that made him shudder, daring not to harbor any thoughts of resistance.

He clenched his right hand, which had been ready.

He grasped the Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag, holding the hilt of the iron-black broadsword.

Courage swiftly filled Lumian's body, prompting a manic smile on his face.

What is there to fear from a mere boatman?

Even if Death Himself stood before me, I would strike Him down with my sword!

Lumian drew his broadsword, now ablaze with white-blue flames, and slashed fiercely at the boatman, who was lunging at him with its skin peeled open.

With a thud, the Sword of Courage cut through the pile of melting limbs in the boatman's stomach and struck the layer of rotting skin riddled with holes behind its chest.

But the broadsword failed to split the seemingly fragile, decayed skin.

As Lumian readied a second strike, one accompanied by a massive explosion, the boatman swiftly recoiled, slowly closing its opened chest and abdomen.

At the same time, the voice of the Knight of Swords rang in Lumian's ears: "Stop. We've got it under control"

"This is our chance to finish it off!" Lumian responded without hesitation.

He and the Knight of Swords were communicating in Intis.

The Knight of Swords paused for a second and said, "I know, you're not afraid of it, and you could kill it, but if it dies, we can't cross the River Styx."

Seeing Lumian calm down a bit, the Knight of Swords added, "Besides, killing it won't grant you any Beyonder characteristics. It's merely the skin of the true Ferryman. It seems to have been consuming other corpses, trying to regain a body but never succeeding."

Lumian accepted the Knight of Swords' explanation.

Having courage didn't mean being deaf to others' words, it's just selectively ignoring dangerous warnings.

He then placed the Sword of Courage back among the ordinary straight swords in the Traveler's Bag.

This time, he didn't feel the post-event fear because this was the purpose of using the Sword of Courage. The only thing he feared was:

A demigod's skin has been peeled off? What in hell happened in the Underworld back then?

Lumian watched as the boatman slowly and struggle-fully pinched together the split skin and rotting flesh on its chest, like buttoning up a coat.

Following this, the boatman plunged its long, dark, decayed oar into the surreal shadowy River Styx, moving it at an even slower pace as if resisting something.

Has the demigod of the temperance faction possessed the boatman, forcefully taking control and making it continue to row? It looks like this control is met with strong resistance... Lumian remained ready to draw the Sword of Courage again in case of any unforeseen incidents.

As the gloomy boat rocked its way towards the opposite shore of the Styx, Lumian, having nothing better to do, started a conversation with the Knight of Swords.

"I saw the entire Underworld as a series of descending layers earlier. Crossing the Styx should just get us to the other side of this layer, so why did you say it's like entering deep into the Underworld?"

The Knight of Swords simply replied, "The geography of the Underworld doesn't completely align with the real world. According to the many notes of the Eggers family, there are two ways to enter the depths of the Underworld. The first is to descend layer by layer through the worlds encircling the Styx, which are used to punish sinners, ultimately arriving at the realm where the Blessed of Death reside. The second is to cross the Styx directly."

"Is that so..." Lumian mused aloud, "So, our destination is the realm once inhabited by the Blessed of Death?"

The Knight of Swords paused for a second and said, "Death's palace should be there as well."

The palace of the former Death? Lumian's eyelids twitched at the thought.

As he and the Knight of Swords alternated between silence and conversation, the boundary on the other side of the Styx finally came into view.

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Chapter 769 Incomplete Corpse

769 Incomplete Corpse

Unlike the wilderness Lumian and company had passed through earlier, strewn with grayish-white rocks, the soil on this side of the River Styx was pitch black. There were no withered blood-colored flowers, no ghostly skeletons, and no decaying corpses to be seen.

The sky above was no longer lit by pale, dim, cold "sunlight." Instead, a rich darkness dominated this boundless world.

Deep within the darkness, clusters of pale-white, greenish-hued flames hung quietly in mid-air, spaced far apart as if serving as street lamps.

Using the illumination from the nearest pale flame, Lumian quickly leaped from the gloomy boat to the shore.

Once his feet hit solid ground, his heart steadied considerably. As he crossed the River Styx, the scent of death in his undead body became more intense and evident, while his spirit and consciousness, tightly protected by the Eggers family's golden mask, felt a slight chill.

Following that, a sinister coldness pervaded his body, but the highly decayed boatman, with its hollow eyes, simply reinserted its long oar back into the river's current.

It made no new move to attack Lumian.

It seemed incapable of attacking targets on the shore.

Watching the gloomy boat and the boatman, now facing away from him, slowly drift away, Lumian mused, "Not going to finish it off? With its rank, that decayed human skin would match your messenger quite well" This referred to the Knight of Swords' messenger, the Half-Fairy, a spirit being missing the outer half of her body, meaning she was precisely lacking human skin, while the boatman was just the peeled skin of a demigod from the Death pathway.

The Knight of Swords was silent for a few seconds, letting his voice echo in Lumian's ears: "She only lacks her own skin."

This reply was curt and restrained, yet Lumian almost heard the Knight of Swords roar: Don't just find any skin for my messenger to wear!

Pausing for a second, the Knight of Swords continued, "We might need to return across the River Styx, and we don't know how many Ferryman are left there."

A need to return across the Styx? Lumian then pondered a very serious and important question.

"After dealing with Oxyto's child, how do we leave the Underworld?"

Clearly, this was not something that could be solved by teleportation.

"Our allies in the outside world should be seeking help from the Death pathway's Sequence 5 Gatekeeper or a corresponding demigod, which might necessitate our return to the peripheral areas of the Underworld we were in before, to access the bronze doors of the Underworld."

Lumian nodded, following a vague sensation brought on by the black mark on his right shoulder, and took a step forward.

He didn't ask the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod if he was veering off the path to find Oxyto's child.

If he were wrong, they would inform him.

Reaching the nearest pale flame, Lumian realized it truly served as a street lamp.

It was crafted from gold, shaped like a kneeling figure with hands bound behind its back, its head tilted back and torso bent outward.

A dark, sinister wick protruded from the statue's mouth, coated in a layer of pale yellow translucent grease. The pale-white flame burned quietly, seemingly for thousands of years without a hint of extinguishing.

From this human-shaped lamp onward, the ground was covered with dark, cracked stone slabs.

Lumian could imagine just how solemn and solemn the path to Death's palace must have been.

(Amonoculus' note: Not sure why the official translation has used the word solemn twice here.)

He walked along the path, which was inexplicably cracked and shattered, quickly but cautiously heading deeper into the darkness, towards the place suspected to hold the Abscessed Hand's body part.

The path also presented a slightly downward trajectory.

This reminded Lumian of Hotel Orella he had once stayed in, recalling the words spoken by Iveljsta, a descendant of Death-many believed that the true hell and the origin of death lay deep underground, so one had to continually descend, delving

deeper and deeper.

This is reflected in the Underworld too... After walking for a while, Lumian suddenly conjured a large, blazing white flame in his hand.

The bright light quickly dispelled the darkness further away, allowing Lumian to clearly see the surroundings: Mausoleum-style buildings were either completely collapsed or half fallen, deathly quiet, with no bones or bodies. These buildings varied in color, not just black, but also pale-white, golden, dark red, and sinister green.

"Did the Blessed of Death once live in these houses?" Lumian asked the Knight of Swords, who was well-versed in the history of the Southern Continent and the legends of the Underworld.

The Knight of Swords replied succinctly, "I don't know" He then added, "Only by finding a creature that entered and exited the Underworld before the fall of Death can we be sure."

"Alright..." Lumian didn't press further and quickened his pace.

This was because he felt that the body part of the Abscessed Hand was not far ahead!

His right hand went back into the Traveler's Bag, ready to draw the Sword of Courage at any moment.

As for the Devil's Whispers ring, he didn't plan to wear it yet; he didn't think becoming undead would immunize him against the malevolent effects unleashed by that Sealed Artifact.

Undead beings could harbor malice too!

After all, undead beings such as wraiths and evil spirits were formed around the core of their own obsessions and residual malice.

Moreover, Lumian's spirit and consciousness were still protected by the golden mask of the Eggers family, remaining in a living state.

After a quick jog, guided by the pale-white flame of the human-shaped street lamps and the blazing white orb above, Lumian discovered a grand structure along the side of the cracked stone slabs.

It appeared to be a cathedral, entirely black and about fifty to sixty meters tall, but its upper half had already collapsed into the lower part.

Lumian concentrated, listening intently, and heard faint, strange sounds emanating from the grand but ruined cathedral.

It was as if someone was using a blunt sword to slice through flesh and saw through bones, causing a headache to the listener.

"I have another matter to resolve inside this cathedral," Lumian finally disclosed his intent to the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod.

He then firmly added, "It should be quick."

He remembered what Madam Magician had said: the true danger of the Abscessed Hand would only manifest once all its parts were assembled, and currently, two parts were still in the City of Exiles Morora, so there was no need to worry about that.

The enemy he might face next could be the undead being creating the sound just heard.

"Alright," the Knight of Swords did not inquire about the specifics.

"Thank you," Lumian responded sincerely.

The Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod neither objected nor disengaged from Lumian's body, indicating their tacit approval to provide the necessary assistance when needed.

Lumian extinguished the blazing white orb hovering above his head to avoid provoking the undead within the dilapidated cathedral.

He transformed into a shadow, blending into the areas not illuminated by the pale-white flames, and silently infiltrated the building whose upper half had entirely collapsed inward.

From the shadows, Lumian saw columns thrust into the ground, a dome shattered into pieces, and a bird statue broken in half.

After winding through the ruins for a while, Lumian's path brightened suddenly.

Ten meters ahead on a crumbling wall, several bone torches burning with pale green flames were inserted, the dense darkness above streaming through a large hole created by the collapsed dome, blocked outside by this dim light.

Beneath the bone torches, a long table made of grayish-white stone was set up, upon which lay a half-corpse, head severed and vertically split open.

The corpse wore no clothes, its body bluish-black and swollen with decay, oozing yellowish-red pus everywhere.

It appeared significantly larger than a normal human, unclear whether it was a half-giant in life or merely bloated by post-mortem gasses.

Lumian recognized it instantly-this was the body of the Abscessed Hand!

It comprised the left half, including one hand and one foot.

In front of the Abscessed Hand's corpse stood a towering figure, about four meters tall. The figure's skin was pitch-black, etched with numerous sinister patterns, most of which had decayed, exposing bare, ghostly white bones or appearing as half-melted, viscous tissue.

At that moment, this figure, bent over, was slowly cutting into the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand with an even larger pale-white leg bone, likely from another unknown source.

Lumian noticed two curved, tattered black goat horns growing from the figure's head, its profile resembling a fusion of human and goat features, becoming increasingly terrifying the longer he looked.

An undead being transformed from a Beyonder of the Devil pathway after death? Just as Lumian had this thought, he saw the goat-faced giant slice off a chunk of bluish-black decaying flesh and stuff it into its mouth, chewing vigorously, causing pale yellow pus to splatter.

On the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand, the decaying flesh writhed and grew, filling in the cuts made.

A cycle of one eating, the other growing? Lumian was pondering a plan to take the Abscessed Hand's corpse when the Devil-like undead suddenly turned around, looked towards the shadows where he was hiding, and spoke in an unintelligible language using a hollow, decayed voice.

Though he couldn't understand the words, Lumian felt a strange pulsation in his flesh, compelling him to leave his shadow form and revert to his undead appearance with the golden mask.

However, the decaying, goat-faced Devil did not take the opportunity to attack.

After two seconds, the voice of the Knight of Swords reached Lumian's ears: "It's asking: 'Do you need flesh?'"

Do you need flesh? Lumian was first stunned, then relieved that he had a translator.

Looking at the hunched-over, Devil-like giant undead, Lumian suddenly had a strange thought: Is this considered making a deal with a Demon?

Has the aftereffects from using the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction finally caught up with me?

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Chapter 770 Egg

710 Egg

For a moment, Lumian was unsure whether the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, a Beyonder item from the Broker pathway, actually had negative effects.

On the one hand, encountering a deal with Demons and other evil beings surprisingly prevented a potential battle. Without this "negative effect," Lumian suspected he would have been attacked the instant he was spotted by the goat-faced Demon, instead of being asked if he needed flesh. This seemed like a manifestation of how a Shadow Merchant could reduce the malice from dangerous creatures and mysterious entities.

However, it was definitely wrong if this wasn't considered a negative effect. Dealing with a Demon wouldn't be simple or easy. It might even be very dangerous, even if the Demon was already dead.

After a few seconds of deliberation, Lumian, pointing to the half-body of the Abscessed Hand on the grayish-white stone table, asked, "I want it all. What must I give in return?"

He planned to gauge the difficulty of the transaction first. If it proved too challenging, he would ask for help from the temperance faction demigod to confront and collectively eliminate this decaying goat-faced Demon!

Having a deal offered by a Demon didn't mean you had to accept it!

As soon as Lumian spoke, he felt his body stiffen and a coldness spread within him.

He understood what was happening and didn't resist or struggle, then found himself involuntarily speaking in a gravelly, metallic voice, as if using dead vocal cords.

His words were repeated in an unknown language by the goat-faced giant, and every word struck a chill into Lumian's spirit, feeling as though they were piercing his Spirit Body.

Bent over and goat-faced, the black-skinned decaying Demon responded in the same hollow language, its voice echoing ominously.

One of the words seemed to grasp Lumian's Spirit Body and body as if by a giant hand.

If it weren't for his "dead" state and the protection of the Eggers family's golden mask, just this interaction alone could have severely harmed him.

Soon, the ethereal voice of the Knight of Swords resonated in his mind: "I want Farbauti dead!"

Farbauti? The Devil Monarch, Farbauti, the true form of Naboredisley?

The terms of the deal require me to kill an ancient god? Lumian narrowed his eyes at the towering goat-faced devil, regaining control of his voice to say, "That's an ancient god. I can't do it. Change the terms."

If the goat-faced devil refused to change the terms, then there was no need for negotiation!

Facing an ancient god might be beyond me, but taking you down certainly wasn't!

It was just a matter of owing a favor to a demigod!

That debt could be repaid slowly over time!

It was unclear whether it was the Knight of Swords or the temperance faction demigod who then took control of Lumian's body, translating his words into a language the goat-faced Demon could understand.

This also brought Lumian a strange sensation.

The goat-faced Demon, capable of standing four to five meters tall but appearing only a bit over three meters due to its bent back, fell silent for a moment before speaking in a deep, hollow tone, "I want that egg."

Egg? Lumian muttered to himself in confusion.

He understood directly because the Knight of Swords had already translated it synchronously.

"Where is this egg?" Lumian inquired.

As a member of the temperance faction took control of his mouth to relay the question, the decaying goat-faced Demon let the massive thigh bone in its hand drop to the ground with a loud thud.

"In the palace," the goat-faced Demon answered simply, making the Knight of Swords' job of translating much easier.

This also made the Knight of Swords' translation job much easier.

Lumian asked, seeking confirmation, "The palace of Death?"

Could a former divine residence be extremely dangerous?

The goat-faced Demon's eyes, oozing blood and pus, shifted slightly.

"Yes."

An egg within Death's palace... Lumian hesitated between agreeing to the deal or just seizing it.

As he surveyed his surroundings, he further inquired, "What does this egg look like?"

While waiting for the member of the temperance faction to translate, Lumian noticed a broken statue by a half-buried stone pillar, with only parts of its body remaining.

It was vaguely recognizable as an avian statue, its feathers seemingly woven from mystical patterns, pale-white and dim.

An avian statue... Lumian thought, connecting this with the egg the goat-faced Demon wanted.

Once the translation was finished and control of his mouth returned, he added, "A bird's egg?"

After about ten seconds, the goat-faced Demon dragged its pale thigh bone forward a few steps, which scraped against the ground, producing a grating sound.

The goat-faced Demon spoke slowly and intermittently, "Yes. It's large. Black, within flames."

It really is a bird's egg, and obviously from an abnormal mother...

Birds... Lumian suddenly remembered the prematurely born child they were tracking, associated with the Banshees in their full might.

They resembled birds, with claws and wings!

Although there are clear differences from this bird statue, they are at least all birds... Moreover, since there is an abnormal bird's egg inside Death's palace, it implies the existence of a mother, a mother in the mystical sense... Lumian vaguely grasped the reason Oxyto had conceived such a stillborn and cast it into the Underworld.

Was her goal also this egg, to use it to do something to the Underworld?

Whether integrating the realm of the dead in the Raklev region into her own Paramita or conducting a ritual to impregnate corpses and bear children, was it all for this purpose?

Sheesh, does she intend to merge the Underworld with her own Paramita?

That's quite ambitious, isn't it?

This is a legacy of a true god, a former divine kingdom!

But if Oxyto really succeeds, wouldn't the Great Mother be able to descend directly?

Even if she can't fully merge the Underworld just yet, just planting a seed is still a very dangerous thing for our world!

Lumian immediately asked the goat-faced Demon, "Have you seen a giant baby with bird claws?"

The decaying goat-faced Demon looked at Lumian but did not respond. It was unclear whether it hadn't seen such a thing, or if the influence of the Broker pathway was limited to the transaction itself.

Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before stating, "Deal!"

The goat-faced Demon's head moved almost imperceptibly. It turned and began dragging its pale thigh bone, step by step, back to the grayish-white stone table where the half-body of the Abscessed Hand lay.

Lumian, lowering his voice, shared his recent thoughts with the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod.

Knight of Swords Maric quickly responded, "Let's head to Death's palace right now.'

Seemingly to reassure Lumian, the Knight of Swords added, "You're wearing the Eggers family's mask. Many dangers in the Underworld will naturally avoid you. We only need to worry about anomalies like the boatman. And if Oxyto's monstrous child can get close to Death's palace, close to that bird's egg, then we should be able to as well. Even with the premature birth and the powers inherited from Oxyto, it's at most equivalent to a Sequence 4."

Upon hearing the Knight of Swords say so much in one breath, Lumian pondered and said, "Its state of existence and birth ritual are quite unique. It might be able to harness some of the Underworld's power. Even if it hasn't reached the Angelic level due to being premature, we must treat it as a Sequence 3 demigod in the corresponding environment.'

After all, this was a baby born through the integration of Paramita and the spirit realm, facilitated by Lake Dalsh. And this baby had undergone gestation within a corpse, birth post-mortem, and then returned to its original form through a process of mutation and integration.

It absolutely couldn't be considered a living creature, for living beings would instantly die in the Underworld.

"Yes," the Knight of Swords answered succinctly.

Under the pale glow of a few bone torches mounted on the broken wall, Lumian asked the two members of the temperance faction within him, "If we continue along the path we were on, into the depths of the darkness, will we reach Death's palace?"

Lumian remembered that the Knight of Swords had mentioned reading many notes from the descendants of Death.

Before the Knight of Swords could reply, the goat-faced Demon standing at the gray stone table suddenly lifted the large pale thigh bone.

It used the bone to point toward a dark, deep hole that had been smashed open by a dome-shaped stone block near the broken statue.

That seemed to lead to the dark cathedral's basement.

Lumian paused, then blurted out, "You mean, this leads directly to Death's palace?"

Based on the Knight of Swords' explanations and what he had seen earlier, Lumian believed Death's palace was situated at the bottom of the dark Underworld. One would have to keep heading downward, deep into the ground, to reach it.

But since it was a descent, jumping directly into the seemingly bottomless "basement" might also be feasible.

Emperor Roselle once said, "All roads lead to Trier!"

The decaying goat-faced Demon nodded slowly.

It was only then that Lumian realized: This fellow understands my Intis language! Why did I even bother getting a translator? Is a Demon still a Demon even after death?

Lumian didn't waste any time confronting the decaying goat-faced Demon. He ran a few steps to the edge of the dark, vast hole.

He formed a clump of blazing white flame and placed it at the edge of the hole, illuminating some of the interior: massive stone pillars, blackened wood racks, collapsed stone slabs, and a winding staircase extending downward, disappearing into the darkness.

"No problem," the Knight of Swords conveyed the judgment on behalf of the temperance faction demigod. "It leads to Death's palace."

Without hesitation, Lumian jumped onto the partially collapsed staircase.

Instead of running down the stairs in the usual way, he jumped back and forth between stone pillars, wood racks, staircases, and walls in a linear free-fall.

During this process, Lumian occasionally transformed into a blazing white flame spear to leap over completely collapsed parts without footholds and at other times turned into a shadow creature to navigate around special areas.

The surrounding darkness seemed to hide something, something even the blazing white light couldn't illuminate, but Lumian ignored it, pretending not to notice.

After descending for an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian's feet finally touched the ground.

In the light of the blazing white flame, he saw that the area was littered with broken bones, some white, some yellow-brown, and some dark brown.

Not too far from Lumian, a deep black stone wall stood, set with a heavy wooden door large enough for a giant to pass through.

Lumian walked up to the door, bent over, and extended his palms, beginning to push outward with all his strength.

His instincts told him that beyond this door lay Death's palace.

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Chapter 771 Pale-White Nation

771 Pale-White Nation

Amidst the heavy tearing sound of a long-unmoved wooden board, the chestnut-brown door slowly opened outward.

The first thing Lumian noticed was the dim light, unlike the darkness typical of the deeper parts of the Underworld, emanating not from golden humanoid streetlamps but from all objects ahead.

He then got a clear view of the exterior.

There lay a cluster of palaces half-sunken into the void, with a majestic main hall, several high towers, and aerial corridors connecting them.

Deeper into the palace complex, the structures seemed to sink further into the void, while those on the periphery stood solidly on a barren wilderness.

Even so, the main hall in the core area towered much higher than the rest of the buildings.

Now, most of the structures were completely collapsed, leaving only ruins and broken walls. The relatively intact palaces and towers were concentrated on the periphery, with the only visibly towering structure in the core area being the main hall and its four attached spires.

At this moment, whether it was the broken palace complex or the surrounding wilderness and the sky above, all had faded to a dim, pale white, enveloping and infusing the entire world with pallor.

They brought light.

This pale-white world still retained a few other colors-gold embedded on the surfaces of buildings and the black at the bottom of the palace complex representing the void.

The latter had two other sources: one was the silently falling illusory dark River Styx from above, cascading behind the main hall, and the other was a creature long enough to be described in hundreds of meters, nestled among the four spires atop the grand main hall.

It was an exaggeratedly large bird, its wings woven from pale-white flames and mystical patterns, quietly sprawling on the roof of the main hall. Many of its pale-white fiery feathers had shed, revealing the black, decaying skin underneath.

Despite the considerable distance, and even with just a few fleeting glances, Lumian couldn't help but feel his "death" accelerating.

He lowered his head to look at his hands and found his already pale, dull, and withered undead skin now marked with spreading patches of blue-black decay.

These marks moved slowly, deepening continuously.

Moreover, his clothes were also beginning to be "infected" by the pallor of this world, all colors turning dim.

"What kind of monster is that?" Lumian dared not gaze at the distant giant bird anymore and could only look directly at the palace complex itself.

After a few seconds, the increasingly ethereal voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric, rang out: "It might be the corpse of Gregrace."

Gregrace? The Phoenix Ancestor, the ancient Death among the eight ancient gods of the Second Epoch? Lumian blurted out in astonishment, "Why would Her body be here?"

After posing the question, Lumian felt it was somewhat meaningless.

This was the Underworld, and it was not strange for any deceased's body to appear here. The Phoenix Ancestor-ancient Death-had perished before the Underworld anomaly.

On the other hand, the absence of the Eggers family's Death's corpse, hidden somewhere, was an anomaly.

Lumian didn't expect the Knight of Swords to actually answer his question.

"It might be that the ancestor of the Eggers family, the former Death, placed it here."

Uh... Does that mean the Eggers family's Death not only acquired the Beyonder characteristics of the Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace but also brought Her body back to the Underworld, hiding it somewhere in the palace complex? How did She, no-it end up on top of the palace? Is it just a corpse? Was it placed there initially? Or did the anomaly in the Underworld come from this ancient god's corpse? With the reigning Death dead, has the ancient god's corpse reanimated?

Lumian suddenly had some thoughts.

At that moment, he heard the Knight of Swords add, "Sharron just saw the egg."

The egg? The one the goat-faced Demon wants? Is Sharron referring to the temperance faction demigod within me? Lumian's heart leaped with joy before he quickly asked, "Where is the egg?"

"Below the belly of what seems to be the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor. It has a pitch-black shell and is engulfed in pale-white flames, about a meter in diameter,' the Knight of Swords briefly described the egg.

Protected by the corpse of the ancient Death? Lumian's scalp tingled at the thought.

How am I supposed to retrieve it?

This might as well be no different from slaying the Devil Monarch, Farbauti!

Of course, for those of high stature, a living ancient god and a Beyonder-characteristic-lacking one reduced to a decaying corpse were not on the same level; the difficulty of these tasks was as different as heaven and the abyss. But for Lumian, they were equally insurmountable, both falling under the category of "impossible even with self-sacrifice."

Son of a sow, that goat-faced fellow really is a Demon turned undead!

Fine, if it can't be completed, then so be it. Just finish off the contractor as if there was no task at all!

As malicious thoughts spread throughout his body, the Knight of Swords added, "It's not entirely impossible to retrieve the egg. The state of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse is somewhat strange."

Strange state of the corpse? Aren't there only two states for a corpse, eternal rest and reanimation? Lumian dared not use his own eyes to inspect the decaying corpse of the ancient Death, Gregrace, and could only inquire of Sharron, the only one present who could withstand looking at the body of an ancient god to some extent, "What's strange about it?"

The one responding was still the Knight of Swords.

"It's asleep, the kind of deep sleep that's hard to awaken from.

"This doesn't align with the current state of this Pale-White Nation."

Asleep? Dead and transformed, yet still needing sleep? Lumian frowned slightly and asked, "Why does that not align with the current state here?"

The Knight of Swords paused a few seconds before explaining, "From what we've seen, one of the reasons for the original anomaly in the Underworld was the reanimation of the Phoenix Ancestor. It destroyed Death's palace, killed all of Death's Blessed present, and turned this place into a pale-white nation.

"We've encountered a few demigods from the Death domain. Since the Underworld anomaly, they could still manage some affairs in the Underworld, even enter directly, but none dared to venture deep into the Underworld to search for the treasures within Death's palace. Their instincts told them it was too

dangerous, absolutely not to be approached.

"But Sharron didn't have such a premonition for danger, so she agreed to come here."

That means, for a long time after the Underworld anomaly, the body of the Phoenix Ancestor still roamed this pale-white nation, keeping the high-ranked beings of the Death domain at bay, but now, it lies asleep... Lumian found the oddity from Maric's description.

"When was the last time a high-ranking Beyonder of the Death pathway felt danger approaching deep into the Underworld?" Lumian tried to determine the approximate timeframe.

"I don't know," the Knight of Swords answered promptly.

Don't know... It seems then, that the Phoenix Ancestor's body has only fallen asleep in recent years. Otherwise, the high-ranked Beyonders of the Death pathway entering the Underworld would have discovered that it's not so dangerous here anymore, and might have attempted exploration, not leaving without a trace nor without any news spreading... What happened in recent years? Lumian thought, unable to suppress his complaint.

"Why did the Eggers family's Death bring back the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse, leaving such a huge risk? As a true god, He could have directly destroyed this corpse!"

The Knight of Swords responded to Lumian's complaint, "The Underworld was established by the ancient Death in the spirit world, and as an ancient god, She wasn't limited to the powers of the Death pathway when She created the Underworld.

"It might not have been easy for the Eggers family's Death to initially take control of the Underworld; He might have needed to use the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor. By the time He truly took control, His state might have changed, no longer concerned with such trivial matters."

Does this mean the Eggers family's Death went mad later? The Underworld wasn't naturally formed, it was created by the ancient Death, Gregrace... Such a powerful ancient god, no wonder She could have undergone reanimation... Lumian reflected inwardly.

The Knight of Swords, sensing his sigh, simply said, "It's said that even among those mad ancient gods, the Phoenix Ancestor, Gregrace, was particularly fond of stirring things up, much like the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor of the Fourth Epoch."

Now that you put it that way, I can understand perfectly... Lumian's gaze continuously shifted among the pale sky, the wilderness, and the collapsed palace complex, pondering whether to seize the opportunity of the ancient god's corpse being asleep to steal the enormous black egg burning with pale-white flames.

Suddenly, he spotted a figure still capable of movement.

It was a creature with a human head but the body of a giant bird.

The creature's limbs were bent, with nails that flickered with a cold light; its back sported wings covered in half pale-white, half chestnut-brown feathers. The development of its head seemed incomplete, resembling several infant heads slowly merging together.

"Oxyto's premature child? It's indeed here!" Lumian recognized the creature's identity.

That was the target he and the members of the temperance faction had been tracking!

At that moment, Oxyto's monstrous child was flapping its wings, continuously circling and stealthily drawing closer to the sleeping ancient god's corpse.

Its target appeared to be the enormous black egg pressed beneath the corpse!

"We must stop it! Sharron will handle cursing and controlling it, and we'll take care of the attack!"

The voice of the Knight of Swords echoed in Lumian's mind. "Okay."

This time, Lumian didn't hesitate and sprinted out from the base of the pitch-black cathedral.

As soon as he stepped into that pale-white nation, his entire being was dyed pale-white, devoid of any additional colors.

This caused him to shiver both body and soul, wanting nothing more than to kneel down on the ground, lying prostrate and motionless.

Silently, Lumian drew the Sword of Courage.

The blade, now color-eroded by the pale-whiteness, suddenly ignited with a bright white flame tinged with blue.

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Chapter 772 Curse

772 Curse

Filled with the courage to battle against the heavens and to strike at true gods, Lumian stood straight and tall, unflinchingly facing the ruined palaces within the Pale-White Nation.

Just then, his eyelids dropped uncontrollably, shielding his eyes.

Almost simultaneously, the voice of the Knight of Swords resonated once more in his ear: "Our target is Oxyto's child, not the ancient god's corpse."

This was to prevent Lumian from looking directly across the pale-white wilderness at the corpse of the ancient death god.

"There's nothing to fear!" Lumian quickly responded.

His voice, once it left his mouth, was also "infected" by the pallor governing this world, becoming weak, hollow, and devoid of emotion.

The Knight of Swords earnestly advised, "But this will affect our battle with Oxyto's child; we must resolve it quickly. Once that's done, you can do whatever you want."

Lumian fell momentarily quiet before responding, "Okay."

Honestly, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask and in his undead state, Lumian felt a bloodline-based fear and an awe towards the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse atop Death's palace, which the courage did not dispel and even somewhat weakened, creating a balance.

Otherwise, Lumian, wielding the Sword of Courage, would not have been so agreeable!

Immediately, Lumian ignited into a bright white flame, transforming into a long spear of light, hurling towards the still-intact buildings at the edge of the palace complex.

As the fiery spear cut through the sky, it too was eroded by the pallor, dissipating and dimming even faster, which meant Lumian only managed half the intended distance.

Finally, as the pale-white light extinguished, Lumian appeared mid-air, plummeting straight towards the ground.

He landed softly on the wilderness, making only a slight sound, and all around was deadly silence.

The bright, blazing spear of flame took to the air once again.

After repeating this five times, Lumian finally reached a high tower adorned with numerous golden patterns and stood at its top, with the figure of Oxyto's monstrous child becoming clearer in his sight.

Although the other did not display the potentially incomplete Mythical Creature form, merely seeing the bent human limbs, a head formed from several merged infant heads, and wings stretching from the torso with half pale-white, half chestnut-brown feathers, Lumian felt dizzy, accompanied by spasmodic pain.

Additionally, something inside him seemed to be calling, slowly gathering towards his abdomen.

It was the bloodline of Omebella!

Lumian felt no fear from this.

Wasn't this inevitable?

In the next instant, two figures materialized before him.

One figure wore a black Gothic-style court dress, complete with a matching petite bonnet and her light golden hair neatly bundled up; the other, slightly disheveled, donned a traditional black vest over a white shirt.

Temperance faction demigod Sharron and a member of the temperance faction, the holder of the Knight of Swords Minor Arcana tarot card, Maric!

As they approached their primary target, they finally detached from Lumian's body, ready to battle.

Indeed, both Sharron and Maric bore colors derived from the impressions left by Lumian, not truly manifested, appearing pale-white and dim.

Moreover, their bodies were transparent and ghostly, in a state of Wraiths.

If not so, they would have instantly died, becoming real undead creatures devoid of consciousness.

The monstrous child of Oxyto, hovering close to the belly of the ancient death god's corpse, sensed the proximity of Lumian and the others. From a distance of two or three kilometers, it half-turned its body and looked over with its twelve clustered eyes.

Lumian immediately felt the protective essence of his mind and consciousness, shielded by the Eggers family's golden mask, along with the life force deep within,

showing signs of disintegration.

In his eyes, the temperance faction demigod named Sharron, using the reflective mirror effect of the pure gold surface, flickered twice between the crumbling palace and the high tower, coming within three to four hundred meters of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse.

She opened her mouth towards Oxyto's child and emitted a piercing scream.

This was Lumian's first time hearing Sharron's voice.

Eroded by the pallor during its journey of over two thousand meters, the sound reached Lumian's ears as a faint echo, almost like an illusion.

Oxyto's child didn't see it that way. The feathers on its wings-half pale-white, half chestnut-brown-rapidly fell off. One by one, the eyes on its face burst open, the flesh on its uncovered body festering down to the bone, as if struck by a potent curse!

Seeing this, Lumian, fearless, transformed once again into the fiery spear of flame and hurled himself at the creature. Meanwhile, the Knight of Swords flickered forward on various reflective surfaces.

Oxyto's child let out a mournful howl.

Though distant and further muted by the dense pallor within Death's palace, the sound was soft when it reached Lumian, yet it still made him dizzy for a moment, a bloody stench of decay filling his nostrils, involuntarily causing him to revert from his fiery spear form.

With this howl, Oxyto's monstrous child morphed into a writhing, twisted, huge pale-white bud. The exploded eyeballs, festering flesh, and fallen feathers were all absorbed into the bud.

In a blink, the bud blossomed, sopping wet, and produced two children.

One was intertwined in pitch black and dark red, its sores festering rapidly until it stilled, turned pale, and fell to the ground; the other was an unscathed, massive bird-clawed monstrosity.

Through this transformation, Oxyto's monstrous child shed the curse and was reborn.

But Sharron seized the moment, her figure reflected within its clustered twelve eyes.

Oxyto's monstrous child froze mid-air, just a few dozen meters from the Death's main hall where the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse lay.

In its twelve gleaming beautiful eyes, the figure of Sharron, wearing her petite bonnet, flickered in and out of view, soon illuminated by intense, bright white

light.

A flamboyant spear of flame shot forth, striking an ancient, partially collapsed tower nearby.

As the light dispersed, Lumian, single-handedly wielding the Sword of Courage, appeared.

He did not hesitate or feel fear. Despite the dizziness and pain in his head, his eyes turned an iron-black.

This iron-black shade emerged only to be eroded by the pallor, harmonizing completely with this nation.

This did not impede Lumian's observation of his target's weaknesses, though all he saw was pallor.

Compelled, Lumian relied on his Hunter kin senses to detect weaknesses, picking the most appealing and battle-raging spot among those pale hues.

Once again, he became the increasingly pale and dimming fiery spear of flame, positioning himself above Oxyto's monstrous child.

His figure outlined; he grasped the Sword of Courage, blazing with bright white and blue flames, and plummeted like a boulder towards the body of Oxyto's monstrous child.

As they drew close, Lumian struck at the monstrous bird-clawed infant's abdomen with his broadsword, now tainted with pallor.

He was using his Cull.

Before this, the Knight of Swords, Maric, appeared atop the half-collapsed tower, slipping on a ring carved in the shape of the sun god's bird.

In his hands, he quickly formed a lance as clear as pure sunlight.

This caused the nearby pallor to fade slightly, erasing shadows and causing the Wraith-like state of the Knight of Swords to melt inch by inch. Droplets of dim liquid fell like wax in a fire.

The droplets evaporated quickly, leaving behind a bit of dust that slowly dispersed.

Enduring the melting of his right side, Maric's expression twisted into one of madness as he hurled the lance of sunlight towards Oxyto's monstrous child.

Considering that Oxyto was a Shaman King of the Moon pathway, the temperance faction had prepared a Sun pathway Sealed Artifact in advance, which unexpectedly proved useful at this time!

This Sealed Artifact, both in effect and trait, would bring significant harm to the Wraiths.

The clean and bright spear of flame became an anomaly in this pale world.

It too was being eroded, but it was also dispersing the pallor, appearing to be able to strike the body of the monster child before Lumian's Sword of Courage could.

Although the monstrous child of Oxyto was possessed by the demigod Sharron and forcibly controlled, it wasn't completely turned into a statue to be slaughtered at will.

It struggled against the influence of the Wraith, as its "reborn" body slowly contracted, seemingly returning to an embryonic state, seeking the comfort of its mother's embrace, while unleashing its own Paramita.

The pale-white wilderness quickly engulfed the surrounding ruined palaces and the half-collapsed tower, also drawing the bodies of a few Blessed of Death who had died in this area into its scope.

In the deathly silence, a horrific giant snake, bearing only bones and some rotting flesh with exaggerated wings, sprung from the collapsed palace into the air, blocking the path of the Knight of Swords' spear of sunlight.

The blinding sunlight burst forth, filling Lumian's eyes.

His strike with the Sword of Courage did not slow down; he firmly slashed downwards.

The sunlight blackened his pale, dim skin, sparking a burning smoke.

A soft "clang" sounded as Lumian's Sword of Courage struck the head of the winged giant snake, splitting the target, which had become exceptionally fragile after absorbing most of the sunlight damage.

In a barely audible silence, the snake's bones either evaporated or shattered, completely losing their support and falling like rain to the ground.

With the help of the giant bone snake blocking a strike for him, Oxyto's monstrous child controlled by Sharron contracted even more fiercely.

Its half pale-white, half chestnut-brown wings and bent limbs had merged with its body, forming a sphere, with only its head, formed from several merged infant heads, still visible.

Its Paramita then encompassed the entire main hall of Death and the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor.

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Chapter 773 Cries

773 Cries

The pale-white light quickly engulfed the bird-clawed infant's Paramita, rendering the spread-out wilderness dull and indistinguishable from the surrounding ruined palaces, towers, and corridors.

This Paramita lost the features distinguishing the interior from the exterior, effectively withering and dying.

As the bone serpent collapsed, Lumian fell straight down, landing amidst the broken walls and debris scattered across the wilderness.

With a forceful bend of his waist and a forward flip, he landed firmly, not relying on his burning-white spear form to avoid the damage from such a fall.

In this pale-white nation, even the rules of the world seemed corrupted; falling from fifty meters felt no different than jumping from a five-meter building.

At this moment, the monstrous child of Oxyto retracted its head into the pale-white flesh sphere, forcing the temperance faction demigod Sharron to detach and hover in mid-air.

In the area near the main hall of Death, five or six terrifying undead creatures, influenced by Paramita, shakily rose to their feet.

Among them were two giant serpents with feathered wings and hairy corpses, a bloated, rotten giant, a humanoid mountain of white bones, and a woman with hair like thick snakes and a face two-thirds decayed.

Each of these risen dead, summoned by the bird-clawed infant, exerted immense pressure on Knight of Swords Maric.

As a Sequence 5 of the Prisoner pathway, he knew he couldn't control these corpses; attempting to wake them would only result in his own immediate dismemberment.

The undead, immense and horrifying, locked onto the temperance faction demigod, Sharron, but their movements were sluggish, as if hindered by an unseen force, unable to attack immediately.

Sharron, too, could control corpses and command the dead, and she was a true demigod with a higher rank than the premature bird-clawed infant!

Sharron's divided focus to influence the former Blessed of Death gave Oxyto's monstrous child a chance for rebirth. The pale-white flesh sphere bloomed like a flower, revealing a giant baby cleansed by pure water, while the sphere itself withered rapidly, turning pale and decaying as it fell to the ground.

Just as the giant baby spread its half-pale, half-chestnut wings, Sharron abandoned her control over the corpses.

In her pale-white eyes, the floating bird-clawed infant was reflected.

She opened her mouth and let out a scream that seemed to come from the depths of her soul.

The giant baby froze, instantly transforming into a lamb covered in pale fur. Unable to fly or use any Beyonder abilities, it plummeted towards the ground, towards Lumian, who stood with the Sword of Courage.

Transfiguration Curse!

Without the monstrous child's support, Paramita began to collapse.

The risen dead lost the foundation of their existence, gradually halting their movements and toppling over in the ruins.

The lamb covered in pale-white fur seemed corrupted from within; as it fell, its skin split, sprouting half-pale, half-chestnut feathers, and its belly swelled, as if nurturing new life.

No creature could escape the fate of being corrupted and nurturing new life, not even an ordinary lamb!

This was a trait of the Madame pathway, and the Transfiguration Curse could not strip corresponding Beyonders of these traits!

Sharron never expected to resolve Oxyto's premature child with just the Transfiguration Curse. Seizing the opportunity, she let her pale-white figure reflect in the mutated lamb's eyes.

The lamb's swelling belly began to slow, and the mutation caused by the corruption became less rapid.

It continued to plummet towards the ground.

Lumian, standing on the ground, looked up with a smile, raising the blue-hued blazing white Sword of Courage.

As the lamb entered his attack range, a spear of pure, intense sunlight shot from the half-collapsed tower.

Knight of Swords Maric, enduring significant pain and damage, once again projected the spear that illuminated the pale-white world.

This time. the bird-clawed infant. still in lamb form. could not evade or find a helper to block the spear. It could only watch as the golden spear of sunlight pierced its abdomen and exploded.

At this moment, as the scorching white sunlight engulfed the target, Sharron used Lumian's eyes and the pure gold in the nearby ruins to Mirror Jump away from the bright, sunlit, and fading pale area.

Although the lamb's body shielded her from the direct harm of the sunlight explosion, she, as a spirit-like Beyonder, still suffered significant impact.

When she reappeared in a golden pattern embedded in a wall hundreds of meters away, her figure had thinned noticeably, dripping waxy liquid like sweat.

Lumian stood close to the pale-white lamb, filled with courage, not dodging, but standing firmly, welcoming the spreading sunlight.

Wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, his entire body ignited, blackening and melting like a candle, bringing extreme pain.

Fortunately, he was not at the explosion's core, most of the damage falling on the bird-clawed infant, with Sharron taking some as well.

Otherwise, the sunlight spear might have purified him in one blow.

The Sword of Courage also absorbed half the damage, making his injuries not as severe as they appeared.

Clenching his teeth, Lumian advanced instead of retreating, running towards the falling bird-clawed infant with the eroded white broadsword in hand.

With a faint thud, the half-melted, ghastly pale lamb crashed onto the shattered stones.

Lumian arrived a second later, his eyes turning from iron-black to pale-white.

He swung the Sword of Courage with both hands.

Bright white and blue flames flared, the sharp sword striking the lamb's chest and abdomen.

The explosion was not loud, but the flames and the violent shockwave lifted the surrounding rubble, tearing a jagged hole in the lamb's chest and abdomen.

Boom! Boom!

Lumian swung the sword twice more, splitting the bird-clawed infant's lamb form into charred fragments.

The charred pieces were immediately eroded by the pale-white color, bringing a sense of dark, dead silence.

Just as Lumian was about to strike again, the pale lamb's abdomen exploded, scattering rotten flesh and liquid with a strange aura.

Instinctively, Lumian slashed the void ahead with the Sword of Courage, cutting through everything there.

Boom! Bright white flames and a violent shockwave formed a solid wall, blocking the rotten flesh and evil liquid.

As the pale lamb's abdomen exploded, a small, phantom figure with bird claws and wings, covered in a layer of pure water, flew out, heading straight for the black bird egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse.

This time, the bird-clawed infant, reduced to a phantom, was no longer cautious, no longer circling.

Knight of Swords Maric could not throw the spear of sunlight again, as it would cause his severely injured body to dissolve in the light.

Instead, he opened his arms, summoning a divine pillar of clean flame from the sky, aiming at the phantom heading for the main hall of Death.

The bird-clawed infant's figure first disappeared, then reappeared, evading the divine pillar's attack, but was immediately locked by Sharron's pale-white eyes.

Sharron transformed into a dim, stiff doll, encasing herself in layers of ice.

Simultaneously, layers of crystalline ice emerged around the bird-clawed infant, briefly fixing it in place, preventing its disappearance or progress.

The bird-clawed infant raised its head, letting out a howling wail within the ice cage.

The ice cage silently shattered.

The bird-clawed infant's body, covered in clear, pure water, splashed towards the ancient Death's corpse, forming droplets of faint golden liquid.

These droplets, drawn by an unseen force, converged into a river, carrying the bird-clawed infant towards the black bird egg burning with pale-white flames.

Seeing this, Lumian instinctively wanted to avoid the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse. He leaned back, raised his arm, and hurled the Sword of Courage.

The broadsword, eroded to pale but blazing with white and blue flames, flew like a conscious missile, covering hundreds of meters, leaving a trail of flames in the air, and striking the bird-clawed infant.

Locked on!

Rumble!

The sky near the black bird egg erupted with expanding white flames, forming a mushroom cloud.

Silently, charred shadowy fragments fell from the expanding flames and cloud, like a rain of dust.

The dust turned pale before touching the ground, some blown by the wind onto the black bird egg.

At that moment, Lumian heard an illusory shattering sound and felt his Reaper potion fully digest.

He had no time to rejoice as his mind and consciousness, protected by the Eggers familv golden mask, were overwhelmed bv fear and dread.

He lowered his head, knelt to the ground, and hugged himself, trembling.

He only wanted to obey the orders of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse.

As an undead, he lost his courage, his vision darkening.

Thump, splash... In extreme fear, Lumian heard the sound of a heartbeat and flowing blood.

It came from nearby, within this Pale-White Nation.

It resonated strangely with Lumian.

Faintly, Lumian heard a mournful cry: "Child!

"My child!"

Who is your child? Who are you? Lumian instinctively wondered.

The mournful cry continued:

"My child, where are you?"

The voice paused and then rose slightly:

"Omebella, where are you?"

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Chapter 774 Resonance

774 Resonance

The mournful cry seemed to draw closer: "My child, Omebella, where are you?"

Hearing the name "Omebella," Lumian shuddered violently, snapping out of his fear-induced daze.

Who? Who is looking for Omebella? Why are they looking for Omebella?

As he wondered, Lumian noticed the surrounding area growing darker, with a sense of confinement and imprisonment.

He reached out, his hands brushing against a cold, hard "wall."

He pressed himself against it, trying to peer through its cracks.

The "wall" was pitch black but semi-transparent, and Lumian could faintly see the pale-white sky, the collapsed towers, and the shattered palaces.

He also saw Sharron, the temperance faction demigod dressed in a small bonnet and a Gothic dress, floating nearby. She extended her hand, summoning the Sword of Courage, now pale from erosion.

Beyond Sharron, he looked down at the rubble-strewn ruins. A pale figure in tattered clothes was kneeling, bent over as if to crawl.

The figure was trembling all over, struggling to raise its head and straighten up.

It was a face wearing a golden mask-his own face!

Me?

If I'm outside, then who is here?

Already half-conscious, Lumian felt even more bewildered.

Almost simultaneously, he saw his outside self, with charred skin peeling off, sprouting half-pale, half-chestnut feathers. His belly writhed visibly, while wheat, mushrooms, and flowers grew from the sunlit wounds.

Silently, Sharron leaped onto the golden mask and appeared before Lumian, placing the Sword of Courage into his hands.

The surge of courage instantly dispelled the fear suppressing his mind and consciousness, making his vision pale-white and no longer pitch black.

The sense of confinement and entrapment around him also dissipated.

He raised his head higher, no longer seeing himself or using a top-down perspective.

His gaze fell on the black egg under the ancient Death's corpse at the top of the main hall.

He instinctively believed he had just been inside the egg, observing the outside through its shell!

No, it wasn't me inside the black egg, but the part of me that lost courage and was subdued by the ancient god's aura resonating with the creature inside the egg, sharing its senses.

So, I "saw" the scene outside the shell, "heard" the mournful cry for Omebella, and showed signs of corruption!

Thinking this, Lumian quickly looked down at his body, seeing the feathers falling off, mixed with wheat, mushrooms, and flowers.

They had all lost their color, turning pale and dim.

Lumian also saw his belly flattening, feeling his blood, meant to be solid as a deceased, flowing throughout his body.

Suddenly, he understood why Oxyto risked so much to nurture a fetus with undead traits and an aura of the Underworld.

Even with just a bit of Omebella's bloodline, suppressed by the ancient god's corpse, he could resonate and interact with the creature inside the black egg. How much more could the bird-clawed infant, with more of the Great Mother's gifts, fused with Paramita and the Underworld, and perhaps also with Omebella's bloodline!

If we hadn't taken out Oxyto's premature child in time, it might have used the resonance and interaction to merge with the creature inside the black egg, controlling it from the source, or completing its catalysis!

Hmm, the premature birth meant the bird-clawed infant lacked the rank and traits, requiring extreme caution. Even if it reached the final step, there was a high chance of failure...

Now, the question is, why could the creature inside the black egg hear the 'Mother's' call for Omebella...

Who exactly is Omebella's 'Mother'? It can't really be the Great Mother, can it? Isn't She always outside the barrier?

What is the relationship between the creature inside the black egg and Omebella?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly heard a faint cracking sound.

He looked up in astonishment, seeing the pale-white flames burning on the black egg dim significantly and peel away. The black egg itself developed a noticeable fissure.

It seemed to be disintegrating to some extent.

The next second, the entire Pale-White Nation began to tremble. A deathly aura from the black egg, where the ancient Death's corpse lay, started to emerge.

Even with the Sword of Courage in hand, Lumian couldn't help but freeze, trembling.

The surrounding palaces and towers, whether in ruins or half-collapsed, began to shake violently as if struck by an earthquake.

A thought flashed through Lumian's mind: The Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace's corpse is awakening... Run! Escape!

He shouted this in his mind but couldn't turn his body or take a single step.

The temperance faction demigod Sharron grabbed him, and in his eyes reflected the dim figure of the Knight of Swords, who looked much fainter than before.

Cracks appeared in the pale-white sky, extending towards the trembling ground. An overwhelming sense of dread was rapidly accumulating at the top of the main hall of Death.

Sharron, holding Lumian, initiated Spirit World Traversal.

This could be used in the Underworld but would trigger retribution.

Countless indescribable limbs reached out from the void, grabbing at the swiftly moving Sharron.

Sharron endured the damage from these limbs, continuing to head towards the pitch-black cathedral at the edge of the Pale-white Nation.

Her body ignited with pale-white flames, directly burning her spirit, causing clumps of powder to fall continuously.

Sharron could no longer sustain it any more than three seconds, interrupting the Spirit World Traversal and falling onto the pale-white wilderness outside the

palace of Death, nearly a kilometer from the pitch-black cathedral.

Holding the Sword of Courage, Lumian, now outside Death's palace complex, no longer felt as afraid. He immediately pointed at himself, indicating for Sharron to possess him.

At the same time, he saw numerous jagged cracks rapidly spreading from behind, revealing a bottomless darkness, spheres wrapped in blood-red substance, and mountains filled with tombs...

Feeling achill within him, Lumian quickly ignited in blazing white flames, transforming into a magnificent spear, and launched towards the edge of the Pale-White Nation.

Above, below, and on all sides, countless cracks chased after him like shattered glass. Behind him, from the direction of the palace, a heavy sound emerged.

Amid the pale erosion, the flaming spear disappeared and reappeared twice.

Finally, Lumian escaped the Pale-White Nation, landing in front of the towering pitch-black cathedral.

Here, only the underground portion of the cathedral was visible, resembling a massive mountain.

Lumian passed through the heavy wooden doors, once again transforming into a flaming spear and launched upwards.

When the flames dispersed, he sheathed the Sword of Courage, climbing upwards using the collapsed stairs, peeling walls, and broken pillars, repeatedly jumping between them, sometimes leaping across support-less areas as a flaming spear.

Before long, the pitch-black cathedral began to shake violently. The already precarious corridors, stairs, walls, and pillars started to crack and fall.

Seeing himself about to be crushed and buried by the collapsing building, Lumian prepared to draw the Sword of Courage to carve out an escape route.

At this moment, he was surprised to find the stones and pillars above him seemed to have a life of their own, avoiding him and continuing to fall past his sides.

In such a dangerous situation, Lumian remained unharmed.

He guessed Sharron provided some help, not wasting any time, and continued his ascent, repeating the process.

After an unknown amount of time, the violent shaking abruptly stopped.

Lumian didn't relax, maintaining his pace and rhythm until he sawa pale green light above.

A blazing white spear shot out from the dark hole within the half-collapsed church.

With the flames dispersing, Lumian's figure appeared, standing firmly on the cracked stone slab.

Next to a broken wall embedded with several bone torches, a tall Demon with a human-goat hybrid face slowly turned, dragging a white bone leg.

At that moment, Lumian realized he hadn't retrieved the black egg, failing the Demon's commission.

Instantly, anger surged within him: Was this a task I could complete?

You were sending me to my death! Truly a Demon's commission! Fine, since completing the task is no longer an option, I have only one choice: destroy the commissioner!

Despite these thoughts, Lumian only reached into the Traveler's Bag, preparing to draw the Sword of Courage, without intending to fight immediately.

He was concerned that the ancient Death's corpse's awakening would cause mutations to spread here, preferring to leave the depths of the Underworld as soon as possible, especially given the unknown strength of the goat-faced Demon.

Hunched over, the goat-faced Demon staggered in front of Lumian.

It stared at Lumian silently before speaking in a hollow, decayed voice.

This time, it used Dutanese: "You've taken that egg for yourself!"

Before it finished speaking, the goat-faced Demon straightened its four or five-meter-tall body and swung the white bone leg at Lumian.

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Chapter 775 Cunning

775 Cunning

As the goat-faced Devil approached and stared at him, Lumian's hand was already gripping the hilt of the Sword of Courage.

When the white bone leg came crashing down, he swiftly drew the iron-black sword, burning with a bright white and blue flame, and met the attack head-on.

Clang!

The clash echoed loudly, and Lumian's palm split open, spilling blackened, coagulated blood.

The immense force from the goat-faced Demon's strike made him lose his grip on the Sword of Courage, sending him flying and crashing into a pile of rubble.

The goat-faced Demon stepped over the fallen sword in two strides, standing before Lumian and raising the bone leg again.

Suddenly, in its blood- and pus-filled eyes, the figure of Sharron, the temperance faction demigod, appeared. Its raised hands froze in midair.

Seeing the goat-faced Demon's movements slow down as if struggling against something, Lumian ignited with white flames, transforming into a spear and darting past the high-ranking undead to where the Sword of Courage had fallen.

Perhaps because the goat-faced Demon wasn't an undead created by the Death pathway, its intimidating effect on Lumian was weak. It lacked the ability to enslave his body and mind, allowing Lumian to muster the courage to fight back.

While retrieving the iron-black broadsword, Lumian released the spirituality he had accumulated using his Ascetic ability.

At the same time, his eyes turned iron-black, reflecting the many colors on the goat-faced Demon.

He quickly found a patch of pallor, took two steps towards the goat-faced Demon, and leaped high.

In midair, Lumian adjusted his posture, gripping the Sword of Courage with both hands and descending towards the slow-moving Demon, still battling Sharron.

This time, he used the Sword of Courage's Cull ability!

His spirituality surged into the iron-black broadsword, causing the bright white and blue flames to flare up and then condense inward.

With a heavy thud, Lumian landed on the Demon's back, stabbing the Sword of Courage into the junction of its neck and body. The blade sliced into the decayed flesh like butter.

As pus splattered, the flames on the broadsword poured into the goat-faced Demon's body.

Boom! A muffled explosion echoed, and Sharron quickly withdrew from the Demon's body.

The Demon disintegrated into a puddle of sticky black liquid, condensed from evil thoughts.

The liquid, scattered by the expanding flames and shockwaves, swiftly flowed into the dark hole leading to the Pale-white Nation, seemingly to reassemble itself.

Holding the Sword of Courage, Lumian felt his released spirituality deplete by two-thirds. He wanted to chase and fight the Demon again but felt his body stiffen and his soul trapped in an invisible cage.

"Retrieve your target item first," the faint voice of the Knight of Swords echoed in his ears.

Right... Lumian agreed with the Knight of Swords' reasoning.

I don't fear the goat-faced Demon. I can totally grab the Abscessed Hand's body before it reassembles!

He transformed into a burning-white spear, darting to the bone torches. To better move the Abscessed Hand's body, he temporarily stashed the Sword of Courage in the Traveler's Bag.

Moments later, Lumian felt a pang of fear: I only have a third of my spirituality left, yet I was thinking of a life-or-death fight with the Demon?

And Sharron is clearly in poor condition!

Now isn't the time for that. Shouldn't I grab the target item and leave the collapsing cathedral before the Demon reassembles?

Thankfully, the Knight of Swords acted as a valve for my courage and found a convincing reason!

Without hesitation, Lumian grasped the Abscessed Hand's half-body, trying to lift it.

It was extremely heavy, like metal. Fortunately, Lumian was now a Sequence 5 Beyonder, from a pathway known for their strength.

During this process, Lumian worried the body might suddenly reanimate and deliver a fatal blow. However, the Abscessed Hand's half-body, after enduring years of cutting by the goat-faced Demon, seemed lifeless with no abnormal reaction.

Lumian placed the half-corpse into the Traveler's Bag, relieved to see it "sink" inside.

Living flesh couldn't be stored in the Traveler's Bag, and the Abscessed Hand's body had shown self-healing traits earlier. Lumian had thought if he couldn't store it, he'd carry it or have the Knight of Swords or Sharron possess it to make it move.

With the body stored, Lumian heard creaking sounds from the dark hole.

He immediately transformed into a blazing spear, darting out of the half-collapsed pitch-black cathedral.

With a swoosh, the white flames left a burning trail in the dark, spreading quickly into the distance.

Without the Pale-White Nation's erosion, Lumian flew far in one breath.

Under the golden humanoid lamplights, he repeatedly transformed into a blazing spear, finally reaching the shadowy River Styx.

He saw the gloomy, tattered boat reappear, slowly approaching as the boatman rowed.

Lumian waited anxiously, not daring to fly onto the boat as a spear.

According to the Knight of Swords Maric, doing so would make him sink into the river's depths, never to be saved.

Behind him, pale green flames burned quietly, sometimes swaying with the ground's tremors, sometimes shaking with some vibrations.

Lumian tensed, feeling an increasing danger, unsure if it was from the ancient Death's corpse awakening or the goat-faced Demon's pursuit.

He looked at the slow-moving boat, using a Hunter's method to calm his emotions.

He chuckled and spoke to the Knight of Swords Maric within him, "I thought the goat-faced Demon was powerful, just below the ancient gods, holding a grudge against the Devil Monarch and desiring the egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse. But now, it seems it's just at the Saint level, with only a corpse left, lacking Beyonder characteristics."

The Knight of Swords didn't respond.

Lumian continued, "The goat-faced Demon's initial request to kill the Devil Monarch was likely a bluff, making us more likely to accept the second condition, thinking it reasonable. If Oxyto's premature child hadn't interfered, we might have stolen the egg, only to face the ancient Death's wrath, unrelated to the goat-faced Demon.

"It also used the request to kill the Devil Monarch to build its image, making us think it was formidable, of high rank, preventing us from attacking it or abandoning the egg task.

"What a cunning Demon..."

Lumian then remembered the demon's accusation: "You've taken that egg for yourself!"

When did I take the egg? It's still under the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse. I only resonated with the creature inside, hearing and seeing what it did... Did the Demon mistake this resonance for me taking and breaking the egg? As an undead, even if it was a Saint-level Demon in life, it might have little brain left, acting on its cunning Demonic instinct... As Lumian pondered, the tattered boat finally reached the shore.

He jumped aboard, standing behind the boatman.

Though the boatman might attack later, compared to the goat-faced Demon's pursuit and the ancient Death's corpse's awakening, it was "friendly."

This was manageable.

The rickety boat shook as it left the dark shore, slowly heading towards the middle of the shadowy river.

Lumian looked back at the depths of the Underworld, seeing the intense darkness calm down, no more tremors or heavy sounds.

Everything was serene again.

Lumian relaxed a bit, instinctively sighing.

This Underworld trip was indeed "intense"...

Only now did he ponder the huge black egg issue: The creature inside seemed related to Omebella!

From this, Lumian felt the Great Mother naming Her Child of God after the ancient god, Omebella, wasn't just for symbolic reasons to erode the Earth Mother's authority. The fallen Goddess of Harvest held significant secrets.

But Omebella wasn't one of the eight ancient gods ruling the sky and land, just the Giant King's queen, akin to an Angel. How can Her secrets affect the current era?

Ah, many key pieces of information are obscured by history's fog. Only a few high-ranking beings from the Second Epoch know a bit...

Lumian mused as he watched the dark land of the Underworld recede, until only the shadowy River Styx water filled his view.

He suddenly felt the matter had finally come to an end.

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Chapter 776 Secrets

776 Secrets

This time, the boatman didn't attack Lumian. Instead, he rowed the gloomy boat to the opposite shore.

Jumping onto the wasteland covered in withered blood flowers, Lumian, whose spirituality was nearly exhausted, ran towards the pile of bones and corpses on higher ground.

After running for a few minutes, he saw faint starlight piercing through the dim sky.

Next, the void tore open like transparent paper.

The tear blended with the starlight, forming a door of shimmering light.

Standing beyond the door was Madam Magician, dressed in a loose orange dress.

Madam Magician did not enter the Underworld but floated in the void outside the door, smiling at Lumian and the others.

Madam Magician... Lumian had expected another demigod from the temperance faction, bringing a Beyonder of the Death pathway to open the door to the Underworld to fetch him, Sharron, and Maric. But it was the Major Arcana card holder, Madam Magician.

She can find the Underworld?

She can tear through its barrier and create a door?

Suppressing his curiosity, Lumian took a running start and jumped through the starlit door.

He felt a wave of dizziness and his vision darkened before he saw the clear, pure Lake Dalsh and felt the thin air of the highlands.

He reflexively removed the golden mask of the Eggers family from his face to avoid becoming a true undead from wearing it too long.

During this, the figures of Sharron and the Knight of Swords Maric appeared beside him.

"Thank you," the Knight of Swords politely addressed Madam Magician.

Wearing a small black and Gothic dress, Sharron nodded silently.

"It's only right," Madam Magician replied with a smile. "It's a pity we couldn't catch Oxyto. The Great Mother's Bestowed are very vigilant and skilled at rebirth, making them extremely hard to catch."

After a few pleasantries, the Knight of Swords said goodbye.

Before leaving, he and Sharron both nodded to Lumian, showing their approval.

Although the Knight of Swords' request was only to help find Oxyto, Lumian had far exceeded that by chasing Oxyto's premature child into the Underworld and eliminating it. In return, Sharron, despite being injured, helped Lumian control the goat-faced Demon, giving him a chance to defeat it and take the Abscessed Hand's half-body. Thus, neither owed the other, and no additional payment was necessary.

Of course, establishing a friendship and deepening his connection with the Knight of Swords was an added bonus.

After Sharron and the Knight of Swords left, Madam Magician looked at Lumian with a teasing smile.

"Wondering how I found the Underworld?

"For a high-ranking member of the Apprentice pathway, the Underworld is just there. There's no question of finding it. Even if hidden, we can easily locate it by observing the Gatekeepers and master the ability to summon a door to the Underworld. But I didn't summon it; I just opened a door."

"Then why did you say I had to wait for an opportunity to enter the Underworld?" Lumian asked reflexively.

As Mr. Fool's Angel of Stars, couldn't you just open a door to the Underworld for me?

What opportunity was there to wait for?

Madam Magician chuckled.

"Could you have retrieved part of the Abscessed Hand's body if I had sent you to the Underworld back then?"

"No..." Lumian answered softly.

Not only would he fail, but he might also die instantly from illegal teleportation.

This time, with guidance from the temperance faction and the help of a demigod, he had a chance to take the Abscessed Hand's body from the goat-faced Demon.

Of course, the risks had also increased significantly.

"I sensed an opportunity and advised you to wait," Madam Magician said sincerely. "Not all abilities can be repeated; not using them and using them to change one's state directly is very difficult."

Lumian didn't dwell on it, recounting his experiences in the Underworld with Sharron and the Knight of Swords.

Madam Magician listened attentively without interrupting, sometimes showing a thoughtful expression.

"What secrets are hidden in the body of the Second Epoch's Goddess of Harvest?" Lumian asked at the end.

Madam Magician replied, shaking her head, "I don't know."

She paused for a moment before adding, "There are things I hadn't planned to tell you so early because it's not good for you. But since you've merged with Omebella's bloodline and experienced the Underworld, I can share a bit. Do you remember the relic of Omebella I mentioned?"

"Yes," Lumian said, one of his reasons for merging with Omebella's bloodline being the hope of briefly using the Grade 0 Sealed Artifact formed from the relic.

Madam Magician continued, "Do you know where it is?"

Before Lumian could shake his head, she answered herself, "It's in the New City of Silver."

New City of Silver? The Church of The Fool's headquarters? Lumian thought of the giant-like beings that made him feel like a dwarf.

Omebella's relic is a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact of the Church of The Fool's in New City of Silver?

Madam Magician pondered for a few seconds before saying, "First, you need to understand a piece of mystical knowledge. Marauders, the Angels of the Error pathway, can steal others' identities and destinies.

In other words, someone whose identity and destiny are stolen will no longer be recognized by their parents, spouse, or children, gradually becoming rejected by fate."

Lumian recalled the Substitution Spell in the Inevitability domain, which also involved one's identity and fate.

Though different from Madam Magician's description and on a much lower level, it helped Lumian understand her words.

Seeing he had no questions, Madam Magician continued, "According to what we know, I suspect the Goddess of Harvest Omebella had Her identity and destiny

stolen by a high-ranking member of the Error pathway and was killed by Her direct relatives.

"Up to this point, it sounds like nothing more than a horrific conspiracy, but think about it. Why would the body of the Goddess of Harvest, killed by Her direct relatives and robbed of Her identity and destiny, end up in the former City of Silver, not silently in a battlefield corner?

"And more strangely, the ancestors of the City of Silver knew it was Omebella's body and Her true identity. At the time, the Steal effect was still present!"

Lumian sensed something amiss and frowned, "What's the City of Silver's records or speculations on this? Does Omebella's body contain Beyonder characteristics?"

"None," Madam Magician answered firmly. "The City of Silver's records are sparse due to the Ancient Sun God's rule in the Third Epoch. But their ancestors mentioned that the Goddess of Harvest walked to the City of Silver on Her own. Heh heh. Strange, right? You'll understand more when you can temporarily use that Grade O Sealed Artifact. Now is not the time."

This confirms that Omebella held significant mysteries... Lumian asked cautiously, "What did the goat-faced Demon mean when it said I had taken the egg for myself?"

Madam Magician gazed at Lumian for a moment before saying, "There's no change in your body, but I temporarily can't confirm whether it's the same for the egg. It'll need some observation."

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and pointed to the clear, serene Lake Dalsh. "What's special about this lake? How is it related to the Underworld?"

Madam Magician laughed.

"The temperance faction had a King of Angels and Angels ruling here for a thousand years, but they couldn't uncover the lake's secrets. Why would I find out in a short time?

"Even the direct descendants of the Eggers family don't know why Lake Dalsh is special.

"From your Underworld trip, it seems the lake's uniqueness predates the Eggers' ancestor becoming Death."

"Related to the ancient Death, Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace?" Lumian inferred from Madam Magician's words.

Thinking of the huge black egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse, he found this explanation plausible for why Oxyto wanted the bird-clawed creature to be born with Lake Dalsh's help.

"Perhaps," Madam Magician replied uncertainly.

Lumian was silent for a few seconds before changing the topic.

"Madam Magician, now that we have part of the Abscessed Hand's body, I want to go to Lenburg soon to find the City of Exiles, Morora."

"You're feeling a sense of urgency, rather impatient as well," Madam Magician remarked. "Relax for a few days, calm your mind, then go.

We'll follow up on the vortex matter. Your companions will investigate the Mirror People. You probably can't take your companions into the City of Exiles. Also, focus on learning languages. After dealing with the City of Exiles, prepare your team for the advancement."

"Alright," Lumian agreed, feeling he needed to adjust his state.

...

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Lumian reunited with Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

After recounting his experiences in the Underworld, Franca said with genuine emotion, "So that's what the Underworld is like. The River Styx really exists..."

Then she frowned immediately.

"You've fully digested your Reaper potion, but I'm still a bit short on my Pleasure..."

In this digestion, Lumian credited eighty percent to Madame Sharron, ten percent to the Knight of Swords, and only ten percent to himself.

Without pride and after some thought, he said to Franca, "Maybe I can help you quickly digest Pleasure."

"Huh..." Franca raised an eyebrow while Jenna looked puzzled.

Lumian smiled and explained, "I've accumulated fate fragments from Moran Avigny's lust outburst. If we find a powerful Beyonder to take this fate, wouldn't it allow you to digest Pleasure significantly?

"Hmm, Pirate Admirals out at sea would be perfect for this."

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Chapter 777 Traitor

777 Traitor

Franca was dumbfounded. "Is that even possible?"

This can be recycled?

It's not like it's water!

I've already digested a lot of my Pleasure potion because of Moran Avigny...

"Why not?" Lumian said with a smile. "It's like wanting a powerful target to experience pleasure but needing my help to get close enough.

Pleasure doesn't have to be one-on-one, otherwise Browns Sauron's female orgies wouldn't make sense. What we're doing is like dealing with Moran Avigny while also affecting another target."

"This... but..." Franca had to admit that Lumian had a point, and it was possible, but it felt like exploiting a loophole, like using a bug ina game.

At the same time, Franca complained to herself about Lumian, Have you been reading too many illegal books or watching too many orgies?

How can you talk about one-to-many so naturally... Also, borrowing your help for other things is fine, but when it comes to pleasure, this description is just too strange...

Under the watchful eyes of Anthony and the still somewhat puzzled Jenna, Lumian turned to Franca and asked, "Let's imagine a scenario:

You're experiencing pleasure with someone, and another person passes by and sees the scene, getting strongly aroused and experiencing pleasure themselves. Would that help you digest your Pleasure potion?"

"Yes," Franca answered with some certainty.

Based on her experience, pleasure didn't have to involve direct contact or a fixed method. As long as it met the basic condition of the target experiencing pleasure because of her, it worked. It was even better if it left the target deeply immersed and unable to extricate themselves.

Realizing this, Franca suddenly paused.

If this were my world before I transmigrated over, as long as one could abandon decency, shame, and morality, digesting the Pleasure potion would be incredibly easy. After the preparations, it might only take a few days or even hours to fully digest it.

Lumian responded with a smile, "What's the fundamental difference between the scenario I described and transferring Moran Avigny's fate fragment to a Pirate Admiral, causing a lust outburst?"

"None..." Franca was convinced.

She then sighed and said, "You're really good at exploiting bugs."

"What's a bug here?" Jenna asked, confused.

Lumian, having heard this strange word from his sister Aurore, helped explain, "Exploiting a bug means taking advantage of a loophole."

Franca clicked her tongue and nodded.

"You know, sometimes I think you'd be better suited for the Error pathway."

"Then I'd probably become an Amon by now," Lumian replied with self-awareness, laughing.

Franca, being an individual of action—otherwise, she wouldn't have drunk the Witch potion—immediately asked, "Which Pirate Admiral should we target?

"Isn't it too dangerous? Each Pirate Admiral has their own fleet with many Beyonders and backing from powerful forces."

"We're just giving him pleasure, not doing anything else. What's there to worry about?" Lumian replied casually. "Even if we can't hold back and kill him, so what? We've already offended plenty of powerful forces.

These Pirate Admirals aren't exactly law-abiding citizens."

Seeing Franca still wanting to say something, Lumian added, "This will also be a good test for our team. Trust me, the few of us together are as good as any Pirate Admiral's crew. Plus, we can find opportunities for Jenna to digest her Witch potion and for Anthony to digest his Hypnotist potion."

"Alright." Franca nodded. "Let's gather intelligence on the Pirate Admirals and see who we can locate."

First, they needed to find someone!

Having settled that, Franca once again commented on Lumian's Underworld trip, "That ended so quickly. I couldn't contact 007 last night to give him Jenna's messenger summoning method. I thought I'd return to Trier tonight to complete

this task. Who knew the whole mission would end so soon? We don't need to go to the Southern Continent or give 007 the summoning method."

She had expected the mission to last several days, maybe a week or two, but it was done in one morning.

In Saint Viève Cathedral.

Angoulême, wearing a brown wool coat, stood at the door of the room, gazing up the stairs leading to the higher floor.

Yesterday, he and several colleagues were ordered to stay on night duty without being given a reason.

Angoulême could vaguely guess the reason, as he had provided the relevant information to the higher-ups.

As time slowly passed, a middle-aged man in a white robe with golden threads came up the grand staircase.

The man had black hair and brown eyes, an authoritative presence, and neatly trimmed mustache.

Angoulême recognized him. They had interacted a few times while handling some occult cases in the Trier region.

This was Peacock, Senior Deacon of the Purifiers and one of the heads of the Inquisition.

He wasn't Angoulême's direct superior, as he was in charge of the surrounding areas of Trier, essentially the entire Trier district except for Trier itself.

He was not a demigod of the Sun pathway but a Sequence 4 of the Lawyer pathway, a Earl of The Fallen.

Seeing Peacock, Angoulême averted his gaze and retreated further into the room.

He suspected that Peacock was a core member of April Fool's outside the Curly-Haired Baboon Research Society, who had orchestrated the release of the humanoid Sealed Artifact 1-147 from church control.

Angoulême's reasoning was simple: The April Fool's core member within the church had used a Broker's Under the Table transaction to get other Purifiers to release 1-147 for various purposes. The Lawyer pathway was similar to the Broker pathway, adept at twisting terms in deals and agreements to achieve their goals.

This pathway's demigods had been involved in numerous shady transactions, making them most likely to come into contact with or be contacted by a Broker.

Before Overseer Perle was discovered, Peacock wasn't on the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's investigation list because 1-147 wasn't in his jurisdiction, and he hadn't

left his Inquisition during that time. Despite knowing the location and information of most Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts as a Senior Deacon, he wasn't suspected.

Today, Peacock was at Saint Viève Cathedral for a meeting.

The official reason was to discuss disrupting the Mirror People's plans and eliminating these hidden rats. The demigods of the Trier district needed to meet face-to-face to finalize their strategy.

After Peacock's figure in the white robe with golden threads disappeared up the stairs, Angoulême slowly exhaled and became more vigilant about what might happen.

A minute or two later, Angoulême felt the whole cathedral gently tremble.

This lasted only a few seconds before stopping. Few noticed except those already on alert for such occurrences.

In a sunlit room near the dome.

Cardinal of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and Archbishop of Trier, Plessy, with high cheekbones and blond hair turning white, stood beside a woman in a white robe, beautiful yet sacred.

She was Saint Viève, Trier's guardian angel!

Opposite them, near the door, Peacock's body twisted, mostly melted, revealing an interior seemingly filled with white wax.

The Senior Deacon of the Purifiers laughed heartily. "The Overseer informed me immediately that she was compromised. I've been using this wax figure to act for days!"

His real body hid in the shadows, observing without interacting with anyone from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

"Just as expected..." Trier Archbishop Plessy sighed.

This had been anticipated. The Overseer's escape made this development inevitable.

Though the church had kept the Overseer's escape secret, they hadn't held much hope.

The wax figure of the Earl of The Fallen Peacock quickly melted. Looking at Saint Viève's impassive face, his voice turned sharp as he laughed again.

"I made the only right choice.

"The Crimson will come. Only by submitting to the great existences can we Survive the apocalypse!

"The Crimson will come!"

After shouting, Peacock's wax figure completely melted into a half-solidified, half-liquid mess.

Saint Viève, dressed in a white robe with golden threads and no other ornaments, watched silently before speaking a few seconds later, "Who made this wax figure for him?"

"Probably acquired through a Broker," Trier Archbishop Plessy replied gravely.

Saint Viève, Her tone unchanged, said, "Few Beyonders can make such a wax figure."

"Yes, that's a lead to follow." Plessy nodded.

A wax figure that could initially fool an Angel's senses wasn't simple.

Finding its maker might lead to uncovering the Broker and the hidden Overseer.

Saint Viève continued, "Inform all bishops, padres, and Purifiers about Peacock's fall, but don't issue a wanted notice."

"Yes." Plessy agreed that a wanted notice for a demigod would be useless and might damage the Church's image among the public.

A few days later, Franca, Anthony, and the others used different channels to gather the latest sightings and rumored whereabouts of the Pirate Admirals.

Looking at the information, Franca patted the top sheet and said to Lumian, "How about this one?"

Lumian glanced at the name and read it silently: Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine.

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Chapter 778 Method of Arrival

778 Method of Arrival

Lumian had already looked through the information Franca had gathered and could guess her reasoning for this choice: Howl Constantine-Admiral Deep Sea-with rumored sea monster blood, often went to an island called "Banamo" west of the Fog Sea for supplies. A few days ago, someone spotted Howl Constantine's flagship, the Newins, surfacing on a route to Banamo, allowing the crew to breathe fresh air and enjoy their precious freedom.

Based on the distance, speed, route conditions, and weather in the Fog Sea, it was estimated that the Newins would reach Banamo in about two to three days.

Among all the Pirate Admirals, he was the only one with a predictable trajectory in the near future!

"We can give it a try," Lumian responded nonchalantly to Franca's suggestion.

Having participated in battles at the demigod level and played a significant role, he felt that which Pirate Admiral they targeted didn't matter much as long as they could locate him.

Franca glanced at Lumian and mumbled, "I think there's something wrong with your attitude. You can't underestimate the best of the Sequence 5s. You're not a demigod yet, and your body is still fragile.

Underestimating Admiral Deep Sea could cost you dearly. There's a saying from my homeland: Strategically, you can underestimate your enemy, but tactically, you must respect them."

"I know. Aurore used to remind me of that, telling me not to underestimate the villagers' intelligence and think my pranks would always succeed without problems. After being chased by them a few times, I understood it well." Lumian said earnestly, "Your homeland also has another saying: Weakness and ignorance aren't barriers to survival, but arrogance is."

"Stop!" Franca grumbled. "As long as you know it; don't turn this into an exchange of famous sayings."

Seeing they had decided on the target, Jenna spoke up, "The problem now is, how do we get to Banamo Island?"

Banamo, located in the northwest of the Fog Sea, was once a Feysac Empire colony. Later, as the Feysac Empire declined and the natives of Banamo resisted

actively, the island gained independence.

It helped that Banamo lacked valuable resources and was only a base for exploring the Fog Sea's end. Giving it up wasn't a big loss.

After gaining independence, Banamo developed into a pirate haven, offering a place for pirates to trade and resupply.

Jenna's point was clear: Even with clear routes and good weather, it would take two to three weeks to sail from Trier to Banamo. Any issues requiring detours or delays could stretch the journey to a month. By then, Admiral Deep Sea would likely have left Banamo, and finding a Pirate Admiral on the open sea would be almost impossible without a stroke of fate.

Given the circumstances, only teleportation could ensure the team reached Banamo in time to wait for Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine. However, neither Lumian nor Franca had the spirit world coordinates for Banamo Island, making long-distance teleportation impossible without getting lost in the spirit world.

Lumian thought for a moment and asked Franca, "Can we contact anyone on Banamo Island?"

"We should be able to. There's a telegraph office on Banamo Island," Franca answered thoughtfully. "We can ask adventurers who've been to Banamo to send a telegram to their friends on the island."

Lumian chuckled. "Good. If everything goes well, we can arrive at Banamo Island tonight."

...

Banamo Island in the Fog Sea, shrouded in perennial fog and gloomy weather.

In the island's only port, Mason, carrying a bundle of items, navigated through the bustling pirates and entered an abandoned warehouse.

The warehouse had been destroyed in a pirate skirmish and never repaired, becoming a desolate spot.

Mason was an adventurer who despised the brutal and ruthless pirates but couldn't leave Banamo because the pirate haven was full of opportunities.

Even if he didn't hunt down solitary, bounty-carrying pirates, he could wait for pirate feuds to end and take the remaining goods from the losers.

This was how he became a Beyonder, now a Sequence 8 Pugilist.

(Amonoculus' note: From the Twilight Giant Pathway)

Today, Mason took on a task supposedly very simple but with a reward of 1,000 verl d'or, seeking a secluded place to complete it.

He quickly cleared the pile of broken wooden crates, stacking them to form an altar.

Following the task description, he placed candles, incense, and essential oils on the altar.

After the preparations, Mason took out the neatly folded task description and read the next steps, "The most challenging part of this task is the necessary knowledge, including basic ancient Hermes and proficient Hermes. If you don't meet these conditions, don't take the commission..."

Fortunately, I learned some ancient Hermes and enough Hermes from other adventurers... Mason felt lucky for his past decision when taking this task.

It wasn't that he was more studious than other adventurers, but the items he had previously acquired involved Hermes. To understand their true value, he had paid an adventurer proficient in Hermes to teach him for a while.

After quickly reading the second half of the task description, Mason assessed the potential dangers and felt confident it wouldn't be a big problem.

He then arduously created a wall of spirituality, lit the candles, dripped the incense, and took two steps back, chanting in ancient Hermes, "I!"

This was one of the few words he knew in ancient Hermes.

He then switched to Hermes:

"I summon in my name:

"A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee..."

As Mason finished, the candle flames surged, turning a deep green, almost black.

In the firelight, a tall figure in a black clergyman's robe emerged.

Mason took a step back in fear at the sight.

The figure's exposed parts seemed long scorched by flames, with blackened flesh and skin clinging to the bones. Its eye sockets were dark, burning with deep-colored flames, and its body was oozing a viscous black fluid like water.

It looked like an undead creature!

Mason had seen similar beings in Banamo Port, as some pirates were adept at communicating with corpses. However, the summoned Penitent made Mason

instinctively fearful, sensing it was fundamentally different from ordinary undead.

Even the Pirate Admirals who had visited Banamo Port hadn't given Mason this feeling!

Seeing the dried corpse in a black clergyman's robe looking at him, Mason shakily handed over the letter.

His task was to deliver a letter to someone named Lumian Lee!

The blackened, burning corpse messenger took the letter and disappeared into the dark-green candlelight.

The abandoned warehouse returned to normal.

Mason wiped his cold sweat and muttered to himself, "This seems more complicated than I thought... I've heard of people being lured into special rituals, summoning evil gods or devils, destroying themselves and their towns... Was that what just happened? Is a catastrophe coming to Banamo Port? Is Lumian Lee the true name of an evil god or demon?"

won Mason had previously seen that the ritual only summoned a messenger, unrelated to evil gods or demons. As a Sequence 8 Beyonder, he had taken the risk, but the messenger made him uneasy.

Muttering to himself, Mason cleaned up the items on the altar.

Suddenly, he stopped and frowned.

"I think I've heard the name Lumian Lee somewhere before..."

He tried to recall but couldn't remember.

Before leaving the abandoned warehouse, Mason glanced back at the makeshift altar, seeing shadows shifting within the broken crates.

His heart tightened. Pretending he hadn't seen anything, Mason quickly left the warehouse.

In Trier, within Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, in the apartment rented by Franca and Jenna.

Lumian saw Penitent Baynfel step out of the void and hand hima letter.

He didn't even open it, knowing it contained only blank paper.

He asked his messenger, "Can you deliver a reply to the sender?"

"I can," Penitent Baynfel answered in a low voice.

Lumian smiled and pointed to himself.

"Lam the reply."

In the foggy Banamo Port, Lumian leaned against the outer wall of the abandoned warehouse, watching the sender walk out with a fearful expression and quickly leave.

He smiled, took a golden straw hat from the Traveler's Backpack, looked at it for a moment, and put it back.

Having the famous adventurer Louis Berry appear here would arouse unnecessary suspicion and might cause Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine to change his destination and avoid Banamo Port.

Lumian straightened up, tightened his thick jacket, and walked slowly along the streets of Banamo Port, his hands in his pockets.

He planned to take a look around before returning to fetch Franca and the others.

Trier, late at night.

AngoulÃªme arrived at the agreed-upon empty house to retrieve emergency contact information from Hidden Blade.

He quickly found the note and read its contents: "In case of emergency, summon my friend's messenger: "Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups."

Seven of Cups... From the Tarot Club? Hidden Blade, your friend is you, right? AngoulÃªme muttered to himself.

He felt he understood why Hidden Blade always had so many troublesome matters.

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Chapter 779 Pirate Haven

779 Pirate Haven

Banamo Port.

As Lumian strolled along the streets, he couldn't shake the feeling that he had arrived in Backlund, the capital of the Loen Kingdom. Although he had never been there, the foggy sky and damp, cold environment mirrored Trier's newspapers and magazines' mockery of Backlund.

Of course, the architectural style here was distinctly different from Backlund's. There were two main types: one was large yet not crude, with typical Feysac characteristics, and the other was a mix of stone and wood, simple and rough, often crowded together without any clear planning.

Most of the people on the streets were dressed like typical pirates, with short knives strapped to their waists and guns tucked into their belts, not bothering to conceal their weapons. In contrast, the locals with dark-brown skin always wore smiles, their faces full of deference.

Lumian fully understood the mindset of the natives. After all, angering a pirate could result in being dragged into a corner and killed, or having someone sneak into their home at night to murder them. The killer would then sail away on their pirate ship without a care.

The current rulers of Banamo Island were trying to recruit pirates and adventurers to maintain order and hoped the great pirates would agree on a pirate code to regulate behavior in the port. However, these measures had limited effectiveness.

This was because seasoned pirates couldn't suddenly start obeying laws and strict rules, even if they became sheriffs or police officers.

Moreover, there wasn't a strong enough force on the island to keep them in check. As a result, it was common for sheriffs to break the law and accept bribes to shield criminals.

The pirate code, agreed upon by the great pirates, wasn't mandatory.

Even if someone broke it, they would only face minor punishment within their own crew. No one would hand over their own men to be dealt with by others.

These measures' greatest effect was making Banamo Port appear somewhat orderly. As Lumian admired the bustling street scenes, he occasionally heard screams or gunshots from the alleys.

This place is perfect for a Hunter, he thought, genuinely appreciating it.

When two groups of pirates started a brawl in the middle of the street, Lumian had a sudden idea: A Iarge-scale plague for a Demoness of Despair advancement ritual could work here...

But I would need to develop medicine to prevent infection or severe illness and secretly distribute it to the locals...

The only problem is that there aren't 30,000 pirates here. However, there are quite a few Beyonders among them. Infecting them and causing them suffering and despair should significantly reduce the number needed for the ritual...

As Lumian watched the pirate brawl with interest, he pondered the feasibility of holding the Demoness of Despair ritual in Banamo Port.

When the fight was almost over, the sheriffs finally arrived, dispersing the two groups and symbolically arresting a few people.

They were just waiting for the respective pirate crews to pay the fines!

As for the grievances between the two groups, the sheriffs didn't care. If they wanted revenge, they would have to settle it out at sea.

Meanwhile, adventurers and locals quietly dragged away some of the pirate corpses left on the street.

Lumian felt like applauding this kind of order.

Taking advantage of the remaining daylight and the sun filtering through the fog, he continued his leisurely stroll through Banamo Port.

Passing a stone house with a small square, he saw a dozen or so people gathered, mostly locals. A pirate wearing a bicorne hat and blue woolen clothes stood on a stone platform in front of them.

The pirate was shouting in Feysac, "You're just a bunch of pups fresh from your mother's embrace. If you want to become proper pirates, you need training. Today, I'll give you your first lesson: who you can and can't mess with at sea..."

Feysac was the language with the least difference from ancient Feysac.

Lumian, skilled in ancient Feysac, barely understood what the pirate was Saying. He realized that the pirate crew was recruiting newcomers and providing basic training.

Why does this feel like a big company in Trier hiring new employees...

Lumian grumbled to himself as he watched the pirate display wanted posters and portraits, introducing the six kings, nine admirals, and notable adventurers.

This was exactly the information Lumian needed. He stopped and listened from a distance.

As expected, he saw a portrait and detailed introduction of Louis Berry.

At the end, the pirate with the bicorne hat pointed to a portrait and said, "His bounty isn't high, but you must never underestimate him, or even have any contact with him."

No contact at alI? Lumian focused on the portrait, seeing a burly man in his thirties with thick brown body hair, wearing suspenders and a white shirt.

The pirate's tone became serious as he introduced the man to the new pirates, "His name is Frank Lee, the first mate of the Queen of Stars. He's a Druid.

"What is a Druid? I'll explain when we cover Beyonder knowledge. For now, just know that a Druid is Sequence 5, on par with the Pirate Admirals. So, understand how terrifying Frank Lee is?

"But that's not the main reason adventurers and pirates fear him. I don't know the exact reason either. I only know that every pirate and adventurer who's encountered Frank Lee acts like they've gone mad. They jump out of their chairs and sometimes vomit when his name is mentioned. They always warn me to stay away from Frank Lee and not to leave any blood near him or eat anything found around him..."

So, the legendary Druid Frank Lee is the first mate of the Pirate King...

But why are so many pirates and adventurers so terrified of him? Even if he has the strength of a Pirate Admiral and is ruthless, it shouldn't cause this reaction... Lumian silently mused as he listened to the pirate's introduction.

He was curious about what made Frank Lee so special.

After watching the pirate crew's recruitment, Lumian headed to the nearby Carnival Bar.

He pushed through the unapologetically pirate crowd and sat on a high stool at the bar, ordering a Lanti Proof.

The common language in Banamo Port was Feysac, but pirates spoke various languages, and few were multilingual. Those who spoke Feysac formed one circle, those who spoke Intisian another, and so on. Lumian chose the Carnival Bar because all its signage was in Intisian.

In the noisy, lively environment, Lumian took two sips of his drink, put down his glass, and asked the bartender loudly in Intisian, "Do you have detailed information on the nine Pirate Admirals? Something beyond the wanted posters."

Suddenly, the entire bar went silent. Every pirate turned to look at Lumian at the bar.

It became so quiet that the sound of someone swallowing could be heard.

The bartender's expression turned awkward and amused. He asked Lumian, "Are you an adventurer?"

An adventurer coming to a pirate bar to ask for detailed information on the Pirate Admirals!

Lumian didn't answer the bartender. He half-turned to look at the staring pirates.

Around him, one by one, crimson-white fireballs began to form and float in the air.

Lumian smiled, raising his chin slightly. "Even though your bounties are low and I don't want to bother, if anyone wants to give me money voluntarily, I won't mind accepting it."

The pirates' expressions changed, but Lumian's gaze remained steady.

He scanned their faces and sneered. "Anyone want to try?"

Silence. The entire Carnival Bar remained silent.

Everyone could feel the danger in those crimson-white fireballs.

Lumian stopped provoking them, pointing to a chair a few meters behind him.

"Don't appear behind me. Don't think about using the crowd to get close and assassinate me.

"If anyone crosses that chair, I'll kill them."

After speaking, Lumian turned back, smiling at the bartender amid the fireballs.

"Now, you can answer my question."

Seeing this adventurer not introduce himself or boast about his exploits, but show absolute confidence and a nonchalant attitude toward killing, the bartender forced a smile.

"We know about the same as the wanted posters. If you want more hidden details, ask the enemies of the Pirate Admirals. Emperor Roselle once said the person who knows you best is your enemy."

"Tell me about each Pirate Admiral's enemies," Lumian said, taking another sip of his Lanti Proof.

In the bar, the pirates resumed their conversations, while some quietly left, seemingly to find help upon seeing the adventurer easily maintain the fireballs.

Lumian didn't stop them or even look their way.

When the bartender finished, Lumian had a general understanding of who Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's enemies were. This Pirate Admiral with sea monster blood was usually low-key and mysterious.

Besides doing pirate work in a bloody and brutal manner, he rarely clashed with other Pirate Admirals or major forces. However, the former Vice Admiral Dusk, now the King of Dusk, Bulatov Ivan, suspected Howl Constantine's two "submarine ships" came from a legendary sea treasure, the Lost Newins. He targeted Admiral Deep Sea, seeking information on the Newins, leading to multiple conflicts.

When Bulatov became a king over the seas, Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine had no choice but to avoid this powerhouse and his fleet.

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Chapter 780 Primary Job

780 Primary Job

Lumian listened to the bartender recount the rivalries and grudges of the Pirate Admirals while the pirates behind him grew increasingly restless.

They were all hoping someone would make the first move, either by shooting or stabbing the arrogant adventurer, so they could all rush him at once.

But the threat of those crimson-white fireballs deterred them. They looked at each other, but no one dared cross the chair Lumian had designated.

They figured anyone this brazen had to be pretty strong, and the Carnival Bar was low-tier, with no high-profile pirates around. They could only hope those who had left would return with someone more formidable.

After about ten minutes, one of the pirates who had left pushed open the heavy wooden door.

Behind him was a middle-aged man wearing a tricorne hat and dressed in dark blue.

The pirates in the bar immediately straightened up, holding their breath. The noisy, lively atmosphere quickly returned to silence.

Some of them recognized the man, knowing him as Captain Flying Hadmagk of the Rosemary, a well-known pirate just below the Pirate Admirals, active on the Five Seas for over a decade.

The pirate who opened the door flashed a flattering smile and pointed at Lumian's back. "Captain, that's the adventurer I mentioned! He dared to provoke all the pirates in Banamo Port!"

Hadmagk, with his thick, dark hair and imposing presence, stared at Lumian's back for a few seconds. He paused before asking, "How long has he been maintaining those fireballs?"

"I don't know. They were there when I left the bar, but he might not have kept them up the whole time," the pirate replied. He grabbed a young pirate sitting by the door, pointing at Lumian and growling, "How long has he been keeping those fireballs up?"

The young pirate, a bit flustered, glanced at the old clock on the wall and stammered, "Almost... almost fifteen minutes."

Fifteen minutes? Flying Hadmagk's eyelid twitched, and he suddenly looked like he remembered something important.

He immediately cursed at his sailor, "Did you forget about our important deal at the docks? Bastard, is your brain filled with nothing but booze, women, and pride?"

Cursing, Flying Haddock turned and walked out of the Carnival Bar.

His sailor, though dumbfounded, instinctively followed him.

The captain is always right!

The Carnival Bar remained quiet as Lumian finished his Lanti Proof and stood up.

With those crimson-white fireballs still floating around him, he swept his gaze over the pirates once more.

Then he smiled, raised his right hand, brought his index and middle fingers to his lips, and blew softly.

It was like he was blowing away the smoke from a gun after shooting everyone in the bar.

As the pirates' eyes and expressions shifted, Lumian leisurely walked towards the door with his hands in his pockets.

One by one, the pirates instinctively moved out of his way.

Some felt aggrieved, some ground their teeth, and others consoled themselves with thoughts like, It's not fear; those fireballs are just too blinding!

Lumian seemed utterly unafraid of being ambushed as he walked out of the Carnival Bar, almost like he was receiving their admiration and welcome.

...

Late at night, in an inconspicuous hotel room in Banamo Port.

Leaning back in his chair, Lumian said to Franca, "Disguise yourself and spread the word that an unknown adventurer has been provoking all the pirates, claiming they're cowards with no real strength, and that he could crush any pirate's head under his boot."

Franca's mouth twitched slightly. "Fishing again? You're quite the expert at this..."

Lumian chuckled in response. "According to the information we've gathered, Admiral Deep Sea prefers to stay out of the public eye because of his sea monster bloodline. Even if he comes to Banamo Port, he'll likely stay on his flagship, the Newins. If he wants women or food, someone will bring it to him.

"In this situation, we'll have to risk sneaking onto the Newins. It's an alchemical ship from some ancient ruins, and we have no idea what traps or mechanisms it might have. Plus, there are bound to be many Beyonder pirates on board. As a Hunter, we should avoid fighting on someone else's turf.

"I deliberately provoked the pirates in Banamo Port because I know no Pirate Admirals are here right now. I have enough confidence to handle the other notable pirates. They should soon figure this out too. Expecting pirate crews to work together against me overestimates their trust in each other. Who would they rather rob?

"I don't expect the pirates to have collective pride, but they definitely want to show off their abilities and earn more fear and respect. The pirates in Banamo Port are waiting for a pirate strong enough to deal with me. At that point, when the Newins arrives and Admiral Deep Sea is here, what do you think will happen?"

Jenna suddenly understood.

"If Admiral Deep Sea leaves the Newins and takes action himself, that would be the best outcome. We would be fighting on our terms. Even if he isn't interested, his top men won't miss the chance. With Admiral Deep Sea as their backup, they won't fear failure and will be more willing to challenge you. This will reduce the number of Beyonders on the Newins, giving us our chance."

"Good psychological analysis," Lumian teased.

Jenna shot him a look.

"A good actor needs to understand people's minds."

"And then perform for the 'spectators'?" Lumian joked.

Anthony didn't react.

Franca scoffed. "What if a Pirate King's fleet arrives before the Newins?"

Lumian spread his hands and said, "That's why the adventurer is 'unknown. ' The benefit is that he can disappear without a trace. Change his face and appearance, and we can execute another plan."

"A Conspirer is really an outright schemer..." Franca muttered. "Alright, let's do it."

Lumian then discussed the possibility of using a large-scale plague in Banamo Port, emphasizing the need to secretly distribute preventive medicine to the locals beforehand.

Franca was stunned.

After a few seconds, she said, "You even thought of that... How about we start a plague company? Just kidding, there's some plausibility in this, but in this day and age, there are no vaccines-uh, preventive medicine?"

"Normally, we wouldn't have it, but we can turn to mysticism," Lumian replied. "The Apothecary path specializes in this. We just need to provide them with a number of infected individuals for observation, research, and experimentation. They should be able to create effective preventive or curative medicine. We won't have trouble finding an Apothecary. The Fool Pharmaceutical Company has plenty of them."

Lumian knew from Miss Magician that The Fool Pharmaceutical Company had many ties to the Tarot Club.

Jenna began to calculate.

"A medicine with mystical effects would cost at least 100 verl d'or per bottle. There are probably over ten thousand non-pirate residents in Banamo Port. We'd need to prepare at least a million verl d'or. We can't expect the Apothecaries from The Fool Pharmaceutical Company to work for free or cover the material costs."

One million verl d'or wasn't a small sum. Even a Sequence 5 Beyonder characteristic only cost around 200,000 verl d'or.

"A million verl d'or to become a demigod is a good deal," Lumian suddenly laughed. "A million verl d'or is just an Admiral Deep Sea. Even if we can't kill him, his top men are valuable too."

Franca sighed and replied, "You're starting to sound a bit like Gehrman Sparrow. But while Gehrman Sparrow treated pirates as his piggy bank, only targeting high-bounty ones, you're aiming to eradicate them completely!"

A plague like that would likely affect thousands, if not tens of thousands, of pirates.

Before Lumian could respond, Franca self-mockingly laughed.

"Poor Admiral Deep Sea. Just sitting on his flagship, doing nothing, and suddenly he's our target."

Lumian chuckled, and said with some realization, "Nothing to pity. A Hunter's job is to create chaos and strife. And your primary job as a Demoness is to bring catastrophe and affliction. It's better to inflict these on pirates than innocent people."

Franca and Jenna fell silent for a moment.

...

Achoo!

Banamo Port, Mason, sitting at the docks with a bottle of rye beer, suddenly sneezed.

He immediately thought of the messenger summoning ritual he had completed that afternoon and the unsettling messenger it had summoned, muttering to himself, "Could that sneeze be some kind of spirituality warning?

"Am I really going to be the protagonist of some occult event, the fool who makes a mistake and attracts an evil god or devil?

"Did the ritual I performed bring some kind of catastrophe to Banamo Port?

"Have hidden dangers and problems started quietly spreading in the shadows?"

Gulping down a large swig of beer, Mason tried to reassure himself that he was just scaring himself.

From afternoon until now, there had been no signs of calamity or reports of strange phenomena!

It was just a messenger summoning. It should be fine!

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Chapter 781 Individual Missions

781 Individual Missions

Two days later, at a quiet spot on the docks of Banamo Port.

Jenna, dressed in a black outfit that looked like a cross between a dress and a robe, gazed out over the blue ocean shrouded in a thin fog.

Her task was to monitor the docks and be the first to spot Admiral Deep Sea's flagship, the Newins.

Of course, this was just one of her responsibilities. The most critical part was to ensure no Pirate King's fleet arrived at Banamo Port before the Newins. If that happened, she had to quickly inform Lumian so the unknown adventurer could disappear.

Jenna paced back and forth or found a spot to sit, patiently waiting for her target.

Suddenly, she saw a colossal shape break the surface of the water, emerging from the depths.

The massive object was jet black and metallic, with seawater cascading off its surface. It resembled an elongated, inflated spindle with a thin, curved metal tube extending from its top like a snail's eye stalk.

In the next moment, the metal tube retracted, and the upper half of the behemoth split open, unfolding outward to reveal a broad deck, numerous cannons, and hundreds of pirates. Masts and sails were raised.

Jenna was momentarily mesmerized. Though Lumian had described how Bone Splitter Basil's Black Octopus submerged, surfaced, and unfolded, seeing it in person was stunning.

There was a strong sense of mechanical beauty!

Moreover, the behemoth was no smaller than the latest steam-powered ocean liners, vastly superior to traditional sailing pirate ships.

Jenna didn't need further confirmation to know this was Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's flagship, the Newins.

She quickly deduced that the Newins had arrived alone, without the Black Octopus.

Since Vice Admiral Dusk Bulatov Ivan became the King of Dusk, other ships in Admiral Deep Sea's fleet rarely traveled with the flagship. The Newins and the Black Octopus could submerge and travel secretly, which other ships couldn't do. Forcing them to follow would only expose Howl Constantine's movements.

This was one reason Franca had targeted Admiral Deep Sea.

What a beautiful piece of alchemical machinery... Jenna thought, staring at the Newins.

Her father had been a worker, and his appreciation for machinery had deeply influenced her and her brother Julien.

With Trier full of all sorts of useful and odd machines, Julien had almost given up his faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun in his youth to join the God of Steam and Machinery's Church.

Jenna withdrew her gaze and walked away from the dock, somewhat worried about something else.

Her brother Julien would return to Trier in just over a month after his exchange studies. She didn't want him to continue living in this dangerous city built on a "caldera." She wanted Julien to settle in a place with strong official forces but not as dangerous as Trier. Port LeSeur, where he was currently staying, or another similar town would be ideal.

Jenna knew she couldn't persuade Julien. He would worry about her unless she found a reliable person to marry. Besides, Julien had grown up in Trier, and it offered him more opportunities. How could he leave his hometown?

I need to find a way, something temporary to convince him. Permanent relocation is something Julien would never accept. As Franca said, maybe try for three years, then another three... Jenna didn't consider having Anthony directly "hypnotize" Julian.

Just then, two drunken pirates stumbled onto the dock and spotted Jenna in her hooded, dress-like outfit.

They looked her up and down for a few seconds, exchanged glances, and blocked her path.

"Hey lady, name your price."

"If you don't want to, we'll just decide for ourselves!"

As they spoke, the pirates reached out to grab Jenna.

In Banamo Port, this wasn't uncommon. Local women either worked as streetwalkers in protected places like bars or stayed home to avoid attracting pirates. The best outcome would be the arrival of the sheriff and receive

compensation, and the worst would be being killed on the spot by pirates unwilling to pay, their bodies thrown into the sea or taken aboard a ship and sold elsewhere.

Before the pirates could touch her, they suddenly found themselves engulfed in silent, evil black flames.

They felt a surge of fear and pain, sobering up instantly, and turned to flee in terror.

As they ran, they screamed, "Witch!"

"Witch!"

Jenna felt a bit of her Witch potion digest from their fear and pain. She watched them weaken under the black flames, collapsing and dying as they ran.

Jenna then faced a dilemma.

Should I maintain the mysterious and evil image of a Witch or follow my instincts and take the money from their corpses...

...

In a bar in Banamo Port.

Anthony sat on a barstool with a mug of beer, listening to a pirate across from him boast.

His task for the past two days had been to blend in with the pirates, monitor, and guide the "public opinion."

Although Lumian had analyzed a lot, he wasn't entirely sure how the pirate community would react. Human nature was unpredictable, and among so many pirates, it was normal for some to act in ways that defied logic.

A Conspirer couldn't predict events with certainty like a high-ranked Seer, Prophet, or Spectator. They needed to prepare extra measures to ensure things went as planned and not fall apart at the first deviation.

So, Anthony frequented the pirates' favorite bars, making as many friends as possible to understand their reactions to the unknown adventurer's provocations. He identified voices that could significantly influence the outcome and used his Hypnotist abilities to quietly guide and change the attitudes of a few influential pirates, ensuring the public opinion matched Lumian's goals.

This large-scale, covert guidance helped Anthony digest a good portion of his Hypnotist potion.

It involved actual hypnosis and seemed to indirectly guide the collective psyche of the pirates in Banamo Port.

Gulping down golden beer, the pirate beside Anthony admired his new friend.

To him, this new friend was not only amiable but also a good listener among pirates, not interrupting to show off during others' stories.

Holy Lord of Storms, it's rare to meet a pirate like this. I finally got to finish my story! The pirate Stilwell praised the god in his heart and asked Anthony, "Interested in joining our crew?"

Anthony smiled and replied, "I don't think I'm skilled enough to be one of you."

"Haha." Stilwell laughed proudly.

Anthony glanced around and lowered his voice, "Have you heard about the unknown adventurer?"

Stilwell's smile vanished instantly. "Yeah, I heard. There's so many pirate captains here, but none have taught that adventurer a lesson!

What are they waiting for? This is their chance to gain more fame. They might even become the tenth Pirate Admiral!"

In his rant, Stilwell never mentioned challenging the arrogant adventurer himself.

Suddenly, a commotion erupted in the bar.

"What's happening?" Stilwell picked up his beer and mumbled, heading towards the table.

After a while, he returned to the bar, excitedly telling Anthony, "Admiral Deep Sea is in Banamo!"

"Admiral Deep Sea is here?" Anthony looked delighted.

"Yes, someone will teach that bastard a lesson!" Stilwell sat back on his stool, enthusiastically, "That's a Pirate Admiral! Every Pirate Admiral earned their title through real battles, not just boasting. They could kill all the adventurers here if they wanted to!"

When Stilwell finished, Anthony echoed, "I'm already looking forward to it."

Gulp. Stilwell picked up his beer mug again and took a sip.

He boasted, "I thought Admiral Deep Sea would come to end the humiliation caused by those so-called notable pirates."

"Why do you say that?" Anthony asked curiously.

Stilwell glanced at him. "You don't know?"

Anthony smiled and explained, "Although I'm from Intis, our boss often intercepts ships in the Berserk Sea and rarely comes to the Fog Sea."

"That explains it." Stilwell nodded understandingly. He lowered his voice, "We suspect Admiral Deep Sea comes to Banamo Port every year to find that legendary treasure."

"Treasure? The Lost Newins?" Anthony acted like a genuine pirate.

The Lost Newins was one of the most famous treasure legends on the Five Seas, rumored to be at the bottom of a certain part of the Fog Sea.

It was said to be the site of an ancient civilization of intelligent beings, long destroyed. Strange items often appeared in the area, all pointing to the ancient Newins.

"Yes." Stilwell nodded emphatically. "Think about it. Admiral Deep Sea's flagship was found in some ruins and named the Newins. Anyone would suspect those ruins are the Lost Newins! Besides, the area where the Newins supposedly sank isn't far from here."

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Chapter 782 Clamor

782 Clamor

Banamo Port, Carnival Bar.

Adventurer Mason had donned the loose pants and thick jacket favored by pirates. He looked toward the unknown adventurer drinking strong liquor with his back to him, feeling a constant tension.

He wasn't worried about being hurt but was anxious about when this kind of life would end.

Pirates were never reasonable; they would always vent their anger on others. After no one stepped up to respond to the arrogant unknown adventurer, many pirates tried to take their anger out on other adventurers in Banamo Port.

Frequent adventurers in Banamo Port were used to a life of hiding. They would never openly identify as adventurers, disguising themselves as other professions instead. Otherwise, bodies would be found in alleys or floating near the docks.

In this pirate-dominated port, being an adventurer was clearly a dangerous and elusive profession. People like Mason had regular identities to disguise themselves, sometimes even joining pirate crews to help gather supplies while stationed in Banamo Port.

Taking on commissions wouldn't expose an adventurer's identity because many pirates also took jobs for rewards. For example, if they killed a rival pirate, they could collect a bounty through connections.

Who wouldn't want that?

Pirates approached tasks differently from adventurers. They would first identify the mission issuer and decide if they could kill the client directly. Some adventurers would naturally turn into bandits in lawless areas.

Mason had recently lost his job at a trading company. With his distinct, non-native features, he had to dress as a pirate to avoid trouble.

His thoughts drifted to a corner of the Carnival Bar near the window.

The walls were charred, the glass cracked, and overturned tables and chairs lay amidst two charred bodies that had been burning for a long time.

These were two pirates.

Earlier that afternoon, they had recognized an adventurer they had encountered before and decided to vent their malice on him. The unknown adventurer at the bar counter didn't even turn his head, summoning one fiery raven after another, blasting the pirates apart and burning them.

This convinced the watching pirates that the unknown adventurer was a man of his word.

If he said he would kill, he would kill. If he promised punishment for crossing the line, there would be punishment, even in a pirate port watched by thousands of pirates and many Beyonders.

And the pirates' captain didn't dare retaliate.

Mason had witnessed the entire scene. He noticed that the two pirates were familiar with the Pyromaniac's abilities and were quite skilled, with one being a Low-Sequence Beyonder. Despite their precautions, they couldn't escape the ravens. They were covered in flames by the window before they could escape from the center of the bar.

This filled Mason with admiration and longing.

When will I have such power?

When can I become an adventurer who can intimidate so many pirates?

Mason had intended to "kindly" help the pirates deal with the bodies, but to his regret, their captain and first mate quickly arrived and collected their "inheritance."

I should stick close to this adventurer. If I'm recognized, I'm done for...

Mason muttered, gulping down his dark beer. How did my life change so drastically?

Though he hadn't been harmed, he felt implicated.

This heightened his fear that he might have brought disaster to Banamo Port, though it didn't seem like a disaster yet. He hoped it would end when the unknown adventurer left or a Pirate Admiral or King arrived.

Never perform rituals you don't fully understand... Mason warned himself.

He then raised his glass to his reflection on the wall, toasting to his resolution.

...

In the shadow, Franca was intently observing the Carnival Bar inside and out.

This was her task.

Even though Lumian was vigilant and prepared, he could still be ambushed. The Beyonder world had many strange, unpredictable, and hard-to-defend abilities, rituals, and spells. Thus, Franca stayed hidden, monitoring the surroundings from another angle, ready to intervene or provide a Mirror Substitution.

In the past few days of wandering around Banamo Port with Lumian, Franca had seen pirates drinking, chatting, joking, eating, gambling, venting, and sleeping, making them seem no different from ordinary people. She felt a bit guilty about the possible plague plan. But after witnessing pirate battles and hearing about killings, kidnappings, bullying, robbery, and rape, she genuinely felt that letting these scum die from the plague would purify the world and be a good deed.

Ignoring her hunger, Franca grumbled about Lumian, This guy, doesn't he know it's been an hour past lunch? You get to eat, but I don't! Based on our previous understanding, shouldn't we shake off potential trackers, hide back at the inn, and let me rest and eat something?

Despite her complaints, Franca continued to dutifully monitor the surroundings.

At that moment, a few pirates entered, bringing a lively, joyful, and excited atmosphere to different tables.

Hmm... Franca melded into the shadows, sticking to the wall, and stealthily approached a group of pirates to listen in.

"Admiral Deep Sea is really here?"

"The Newins has already docked!"

"Do they know about the adventurer?"

"..."

Oh, Admiral Deep Sea is finally here... Franca silently confirmed with a guess.

Since Jenna hadn't issued a warning, it meant no Pirate King had arrived in Banamo Port. Franca began to anticipate Admiral Deep Sea's reaction and actions.

She was sure Admiral Deep Sea and his key subordinates were aware of the unknown adventurer's provocation.

It was a simple deduction.

Since Admiral Deep Sea was avoiding the King of Dusk, he would first confirm the situation in Banamo Port before coming to resupply.

The common practice was to send lesser-known pirates from the fleet on other ships to scout Banamo Port. If Banamo Port was a regular stop, trusted subordinates might be stationed there long-term, reporting back promptly.

Of course, local forces could also provide warnings. In any case, Admiral Deep Sea would be well aware of recent events in Banamo Port; otherwise, he wouldn't surface the Newins.

Franca calmed herself, no longer distracted by hunger.

But like the pirates, she waited half an hour without seeing Admiral Deep Sea or his key subordinates, growing puzzled.

Why haven't they shown up?

Could it be that Admiral Deep Sea is also a cautious person? But Lumian is only showing the strength of a strong Sequence 6. This crafty guy is using crimson-white flames, not the Reaper's white flames...

Franca thought carefully and understood the reason.

If she were in his shoes, targeted by the King of Dusk, she wouldn't cause trouble right after arriving at a port. She would complete the resupply first and prepare for another dive. That way, even if something unexpected happened, they could leave Banamo Port immediately and not complete their primary objective here.

Also, Lumian, the unknown adventurer, had been in Banamo Port for two or three days. He didn't seem to be hunting bounties of lesser known pirates, as if he were waiting for something.

This could make people suspicious of his true intentions. Admiral Deep Sea would naturally be cautious.

Phew... Franca sighed silently.

Her gaze continued to sweep across the Carnival Bar, wary of any surprises.

In the process, her eyes inevitably swept over Lumian, noticing her companion's slight smile and good mood, holding a cup of amber-colored Lanti Proof mixed with something unknown.

...

Lumian played with his glass, using his Hunter's exceptional hearing to roughly understand why the pirates were suddenly excited and anxious.

His target had arrived!

Lumian wasn't surprised since he already knew-Jenna had come by earlier and left a note under his hand, concealed by shadows.

Knowing Admiral Deep Sea wouldn't come looking for him immediately, Lumian remained calm, acting unaware of the commotion behind him.

He glanced at the bartender trying to control his expression and smiled.

"The wind is quite noisy today," Lumian said.

The bartender didn't know how to respond, forcing a stiff smile. "True."

Lumian said nothing more, feeling his emotions and state change.

To be honest, he felt a bit nervous about facing a Pirate Admiral with his fleet. But it also made his blood boil slightly.

He had never been one to shy away from challenges. Since becoming a Hunter, he had tasted the allure of challenges even more.

With that thought, Lumian raised his cup of Lumian to his lips, tilted his head back, and drank it all in one go.

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Chapter 783 Boarding the Ship

783 Boarding the Ship

Banamo Port, near the docks.

Jenna hid in the shadows, watching Anthony mingle with the crowd, blending in with the pirates.

She didn't deliberately track the famous pirates who arrived on the Newins when it docked. On the one hand, she feared being discovered, which would alert Admiral Deep Sea to a grand conspiracy awaiting him at Banamo Port. On the other hand, she didn't need to follow them to know the whereabouts of the Newins' first mate, second mate, and boatswain.

The pirates in Banamo Port were eagerly anticipating Admiral Deep Sea or his capable subordinates to teach the unknown adventurer a lesson.

Naturally, they kept an eye on these individuals and shared information with their companions and friends!

In other words, with so much attention on the situation, most of the pirates in Banamo Port had become unofficial reporters. Admiral Deep Sea's key subordinates couldn't go anywhere without being noticed and widely discussed.

If they used stealth abilities or invisibility, they might avoid the curious eyes spread throughout Banamo Port. However, they were currently gathering supplies, which meant they couldn't hide the large quantities of goods.

Thus, information flowed swiftly into Anthony's ears: "Great Shark is at Firth Trading Company."

"Ship Destroyer is heading towards the Carnival Bar!"

"Holy Lord of Storms, those guys are meeting at Blackstone Square!"

"They're one street away from the Carnival Bar!"

"They've stopped for now, discussing something!"

"They seem to be heading to Old Dante's for large barrels of pale ale!"

"..."

Anthony sensed the commotion among the pirates, watching them leave the current street and head towards the Carnival Bar.

He stood up as well to avoid standing out.

During this, he gave Jenna's hidden shadow a look.

Jenna understood immediately, using the shadows along the street to slip through the growing crowd towards the Carnival Bar.

...

Lumian sipped the freshly poured amber-colored Lanti Proof, nodding to himself.

He then looked at the bartender behind the counter, smiling as he said, "You might want to move the valuable liquor and items out of here for now. It's probably best if no one stays inside."

The bartender froze for a few seconds before responding hastily, "Alright!"

No one wanted to alert Lumian by passing on messages that might affect the plan, but he guessed something was brewing from the pirates gathering outside the bar.

He was both excited and nervous, knowing the impending conflict would take place in the Carnival Bar, where he was.

Watching the bartender instruct the waiters to move valuable items out the back door, Lumian pulled out a blank sketchbook and an ink pen, casually sketching as he asked, "How much is your bar worth, including this two-story building?"

"Uh..." The bartender was stunned again.

What does this mean?

Is he implying the bar might get destroyed in the upcoming conflict, collapsing the whole building?

Recalling the powerful crimson-white fireballs, the bartender grew even more anxious, forcing a smile as he said, "Are you offering compensation? You decide, or let the loser pay..."

"This building is a simple structure built by locals. It's definitely cheap. Your bar caters to low-level pirates, so the furniture and décor are all the cheapest kind..." Lumian continued his assessment without looking up, still sketching in the blank book.

"Yes, that's right." The bartender nodded quickly, agreeing.

Lumian looked up, shaking his head with a smile. "Whatever I say, you agree. It's making things difficult for me."

"..." The bartender closed his mouth, unsure how to respond.

Lumian lowered his head again. "How about 2,000 verl d'or?"

"Okay." The bartender used a different word, not even trying to bargain.

Lumian didn't pause his sketching, his tone calm.

"Payment will be after assessing the damage. If the big pirates coming later want to help compensate, that works too."

"Alright." The bartender responded quickly.

He looked around, wishing he could sprout wings and fly out of the Carnival Bar.

From their conversation, he feared staying could lead to him becoming a mangled corpse.

A few minutes later, the waiters had moved the few valuable items out, leaving only the cheap goods in the bar.

The bartender left through the back door, and the other patrons, including Mason, exited to wait and watch outside.

They didn't dare stay in this anticipated battlefield.

This was the lesson of experience.

Lumian sketched for a while, then put down his pen and slowly sipped the remaining Lanti Proof.

A few minutes later, Franca sneaked into the shadows near the bar and whispered, "Admiral Deep Sea didn't come, but his first mate, Great Shark, and others are almost here. They'll be here in about two minutes."

Lumian picked up the ink pen again and continued sketching in the book.

He chuckled and said, "Remember to prepare the 2,000 verl d'or compensation, and when we get back, return the 1,000 verl d'or bounty for summoning the messenger."

"Ah?" Franca was a bit surprised.

Lumian chuckled and said, "All of this is to help you digest Pleasure. You should cover all expenses, including consumed Beyonder items."

"No problem." Franca wasn't resisting; she was just surprised Lumian brought it up suddenly.

She watched Lumian finish his sketch on the blank page, curious as she asked, "Why not just take out the Pride Armor, disguise it as a person with a robe, and have it sit in this chair facing away from the incoming pirates?"

With Lumian present, the Pride Armor couldn't be used, so it might as well serve some purpose by being placed here.

"Do you really want this building destroyed?" Lumian chuckled. "Besides, the Pride Armor can't use Lie and can't disguise itself as me. The subordinates of Admiral Deep Sea would notice something's wrong before even entering."

As he spoke, Lumian finished the last stroke on the blank page.

It was a sketch outlined in deep blue ink, depicting Lumian himself.

The paper gradually turned translucent, and the sketch of Lumian suddenly came to life, thickening and expanding like a balloon.

In an instant, a stoic-faced Lumian appeared before the bar counter, blocked by Lumian's body.

It had the instinct to complete a few minutes of combat and possessed some of Lumian's abilities, obeying the sketcher's commands.

As the sketched Lumian sat in a chair facing away from the bar door, Lumian transformed into a shadow creature, disappearing from the bar.

Soon, Great Shark, the first mate of the Newins, arrived at the Carnival Bar with a few companions of similar strength, surrounded by a crowd of pirates.

The tall, muscular, bald Great Shark glanced at the unknown adventurer calmly sitting at the bar and gestured, leading the way through the door.

As the Beyonders from the Newins entered the bar, Lumian, disguised and watching from the window, placed his right hand on the glass.

A black mark hidden under his clothes glowed.

Bottle of Fiction!

He trapped the Carnival Bar inside the Bottle of Fiction, setting the condition for exit to be non-Beyonders.

Lumian turned, and in the chaos of the pirates losing sight of the bar's interior, he squeezed through the crowd and headed to a nearby alley, teleporting to the docks with Franca.

They met Jenna and Anthony at the designated spot, using shadows and Psychological Invisibility to remain hidden as they boarded the alchemical ship Newins.

Compared to when they arrived, there were fewer pirates on the ship, just enough to maintain basic vigilance.

Lumian wasn't worried their actions would alert Admiral Deep Sea.

According to gathered intel, Howl Constantine wasn't a Beyonder of the Devil pathway and couldn't sense malice. His abilities resembled a Sequence 5 Ocean Songster of the Storm pathway, and according to the Tarot Club, Admiral Deep Sea had no ties to the Church of Storms.

Thus, Lumian had Jenna confirm if the Black Octopus had followed the Newins to Banamo Port-the Black Octopus's captain, Bone Splitter Basil, was a Devil.

Considering the changing situation at the Carnival Bar might alert Admiral Deep Sea, Lumian and his team didn't waste time, swiftly sneaking into the ship's hold.

Within a minute, they found a lone pirate in a corridor room.

Franca checked the surrounding mechanical devices for alarms, then whispered to shadow-form Lumian, "It's show time."

Lumian immediately slipped into the room, moving behind the lone pirate and emerging, giving a harrumph.

Two flashes of white light, and the pirate fell unconscious.

Anthony entered the room quickly, beginning hypnosis.

Jenna and Franca guarded the door from the shadows, soon hearing friendly conversation inside, "Where's the Admiral?"

"In the captain's cabin."

"The Admiral must have a powerful backer to be one of the most famous pirates, right?"

"I don't know, but the Admiral is indeed mysterious."

"..."

After a brief inquiry, Anthony made the pirate forget he had such a friend on board.

They then sneaked to the upper deck, stopping outside the captain's cabin.

Lumian's eyes twitched as he gazed at the silver-white metal door.

He realized Admiral Deep Sea's possible pathway and sequence.

On an alchemical ship like this, an Ocean Songster's power might not be inferior to being in the deep sea or the air!

While Lumian pondered, two pirates pushed a food cart to the captain's cabin using a mechanical lift.

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Chapter 784 Mask

784 Mask

Lumian immediately retreated into the nearby shadows, closely watching the slowly opening metal door of the captain's cabin.

As the cart filled with various foods was pushed in, he finally saw their target, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine.

Though he had heard many rumors and seen the wanted posters, nothing compared to witnessing the reality of his sea monster lineage firsthand.

Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine's face looked as if a translucent, palm-sized octopus clung to it, with numerous slimy tentacles hanging down to his chest. His deep blue, almost black hair was thick and coarse, falling to his shoulders, and his body was entirely wrapped in a black cloak, even his hands hidden within.

He was nothing like a normal human.

Lumian couldn't help but feel this was unusual.

His face, fused with an octopus, was exposed, so what was there to hide about his body?

Even if he was truly an octopus beneath the cloak, no one around would be surprised!

The only reason to cover his body so tightly was if there was something even more unpresentable there.

Puzzled, Lumian carefully observed Howl Constantine's fate.

Being in shadow form didn't prevent him from doing this since shadow beings could still "see" the real world, though the perspective was slightly different.

As the two pirates arranged the food on the long table in the captain's cabin, Lumian's eyes reflected the illusory river of fate composed of complex mercury symbols.

Given that they were less than fifteen meters apart, Lumian extended his right palm, letting it stay at the edge of the shadow, and remotely touched Howl Constantine's river of fate.

Most of Admiral Deep Sea's fate fragments instantly materialized, flowing turbulently.

Knowing time was limited, Lumian could only browse briefly.

He saw Howl Constantine diving in the dark, lightless ocean depths, fighting a half-giant over two and a half meters tall wielding a huge sword. He watched as Admiral Deep Sea passed through ruins filled with bizarre buildings and saw his future self removing the translucent octopus from his face...

Removing the octopus clinging to his face? It isn't Howl Constantine's face; it's a mask? He isn't a descendant of sea monsters? Lumian was stunned. Reflexively, he decided on the fate fragment he would exchange.

It was a fragment of Howl Constantine being injured on the seabed.

In this fate fragment, back when he was only Sequence 7 or 6, Howl Constantine failed to return to the surface in time, suffering the crushing pressure of deep water and the suffocating sensation of liquid flooding his lungs.

This was different in severity from Moran Admiral Deep Sea's fate fragment of lust outburst, which had irrevocably changed Moran's fate, forcing him to an early death. In contrast, this fragment merely influenced Howl Constantine's subsequent exploration style, making him more cautious. However, Lumian couldn't find a more suitable fragment in such a short time.

As fate began to swap, Howl Constantine, who was seeing off the two pirates, suddenly turned his gaze towards Lumian's hiding spot.

His spirituality had warned him!

Almost simultaneously, Admiral Deep Sea's eyes lit up with intense lightning.

With a crackling sound, thick lightning struck Lumian's hiding spot, hitting the wall and shattering into countless tiny electric serpents, which spread out, covering the area with their fierce and erratic energy, using the properties of the metal door, walls, and floor to launch indiscriminate attacks inside and outside the captain's cabin.

The two food-delivering pirates were hit first, their bodies trembling and convulsing as if performing a grotesque dance.

Their skin quickly charred.

Amid the cracking sound, mirrors hidden in the shadows where Franca and Jenna were hiding shattered, but the Demonesses' figures did not appear.

...

At the Carnival Bar, Great Shark Jorg and his companions, including Ship Destroyer, had just entered the hall and were staring at the unknown adventurer's back. Before they could speak, the noisy surroundings abruptly fell silent. The pirates' chatter and conversations seemed muffled, vanishing instantly.

Wh- Great Shark Jorg instinctively looked towards the window, seeing the dim sunlight through the fog replaced by deep darkness.

At that moment, Lumian, sitting at the bar, turned on his stool. His expression was indifferent, his gaze calm, looking at the few big pirates as if they were dead men.

A huge crimson-white fireball shot out.

Boom!

Amidst the flames and wind from the explosion, the pirates either used their agility or abilities to dodge in different directions.

Behind Ship Destroyer, Lumian's figure swiftly emerged in the chaos, letting out a hum.

Two beams of white light shot from his nose, causing Ship Destroyer to faint instantly.

Witnessing this, Great Shark Jorg felt a chill down his spine, instinctively muttering to himself, "Formidable..."

...

Aboard the Newins.

Having used the Lightning Strike ability and created an area attack effect utilizing the current environment, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, had a figure suddenly appear behind him.

It was Franca, dressed in an assassin's suit.

Franca gripped an almost invisible triangular spike in her right hand while raising her left palm, with an iron-black spiked ring targeting Howl Constantine.

Lightning flickered in her eyes.

As Franca used Psychic Piercing on Howl Constantine, Jenna appeared by the door, throwing a Louis d'or at Admiral Deep Sea, seemingly to distract him and make him momentarily ignore Franca's assassination attempt.

A golden brooch carved into a gorse flower was pinned to her chest.

Covered in gray-white scales, Anthony appeared in the corridor, with tiny electric serpents still crawling over his body, paralyzing him and preventing rapid

movement.

But this didn't stop Anthony from using his ability.

Staring at Admiral Deep Sea, with a translucent octopus clinging to his face, his pupils turned vertical, glowing golden.

Awe!

This ability made the target feel as if they encountered a true dragon, panicking instantly.

As fate began to swap and Howl Constantine noticed the anomaly, he struck out lightning. At that moment, Lumian teleported into the captain's cabin, landing on a wooden chair by the window.

Soon, tiny electric serpents covered the area, but they didn't last long due to the wooden chair's material.

This caused Lumian's body to show signs of paralysis.

However, he didn't reveal himself because he was now a true shadow creature, and no shadow being would leave the shadows due to a mild electric shock.

Lumian chose to stay in the shadow provided by the wooden chair, quietly watching the upcoming battle.

During the fate exchange, he couldn't attack Howl Constantine, which would interrupt the process.

So, the next step was to see if Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, three Beyonders below Sequence 5, could hold off Admiral Deep Sea for at least two minutes!

Of course, if they really needed to kill Howl Constantine, Anthony could do it quickly with the Winter is Coming revolver, but that was impractical and went against their original goal.

Awe and Psychic Piercing hit Howl Constantine, but the Admiral's face, fused with the translucent octopus, glowed faintly, protecting his soul and spirit, causing only minor effects.

As his octopus-like face dimmed slightly, Howl Constantine, puzzled by the unfamiliar assassins, suspected some adventurer group wanted to make a name for themselves and earn a huge bounty. Enduring the dizziness, he grabbed an obsidian trident from the nearby weapon rack and thrust it at Franca.

The trident immediately surged with violently flickering silver-white lightning, its heavy tip seemingly trying to pull Franca onto itself.

Crack!

Franca's body, clad in the assassin's suit, shattered into numerous mirror fragments, while Jenna threw a silent black flame at Howl Constantine before hiding in the shadows again.

Anthony also pulled out the exquisite Winter is Coming revolver, aiming at Admiral Deep Sea for a standard shot.

The gunshot had just sounded when a sharp wind pierced everyone's ears.

Howl Constantine, wrapped in a whirlwind, flew into the air, avoiding the yellow bullet and eerie black flame.

He then pointed the obsidian trident at Anthony.

The silver-white currents on the trident converged into thick lightning, shooting out.

Anthony, experienced as ever, immediately dove away from the door, changing his position and avoiding the direct hit from the lightning, though the resulting tiny electric serpents still affected him, causing his body to tremble and paralyze.

The two pirates, just recovering from the previous shock, were struck by the new wave, falling unconscious and twitching on the ground.

Franca and Jenna were also affected by the indiscriminate attack, revealing themselves from their hidden states.

Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, showed no joy or bloodthirsty emotion but grew more vigilant, his octopus-like face showing doubt.

There should be one more assassin!

Why hasn't he appeared?

What is he preparing?

At that moment, out of the corner of his eye, How! Constantine saw a figure leisurely sitting on the wooden chair near the window.

The figure had black hair, blue eyes, a handsome face, and wore a thick dark jacket, reclining against the chair with his right foot resting on his left knee, a mocking smile on his face.

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Chapter 785 Performance

785 Performance

Seeing the assassin who had been hiding suddenly sit openly on a chair by the window, calmly watching him as if he didn't care about the ongoing battle, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, felt a sudden heavy weight in his heart.

Such a posture and expression suggested that the opponent didn't consider him a threat and was absolutely confident in dealing with him.

That's why he didn't attack immediately to support his companions but instead sat there, arrogantly smiling and observing.

Without any hesitation, Howl Constantine instinctively aimed his obsidian trident at Lumian.

A bolt of silver-white lightning formed in his hand, amplified by the trident's tip, and shot out like a raging thunder serpent towards Lumian.

Lumian kept his right foot on his left knee, his face bearing a mocking smile as if Howl Constantine's desperate counterattack was just child's play, incapable of changing the outcome at all.

Of course, this was just a front he put on.

In reality, he couldn't attack Howl Constantine or leave the hundred-meter range, or else the Fate Exchange would be interrupted.

But not being able to attack didn't mean he couldn't influence the current battle. Lumian left his shadow form and deliberately revealed his presence to Howl Constantine, using himself as bait to attract most of Admiral Deep Sea's attention and create a sense of pressure and fear, forcing him to react hastily and increase the chance of making mistakes.

Even a Hunter who couldn't strike, speak, or communicate could still provoke, scheme, and set traps!

The thick silver-white thunder serpent struck Lumian.

With a crack, Lumian's figure shattered like a mirror, leaving only the quickly charred wooden chair behind in the ravaging lightning.

He disappeared again, and the thunder serpent, constrained by the chair's material, didn't dissipate much.

This made Howl Constantine anxious, considering whether to break through the window and dive into the sea.

Underwater, he feared no Beyonder below demigod level!

Even many Saints couldn't dive into the depths to fight him!

Just then, he felt his limbs and body being bound layer by layer, making it difficult to move or turn the obsidian trident quickly.

The bindings tightened rapidly.

Taking advantage of Lumian drawing away most of Howl Constantine's attention and caution, Franca had set up the spider silk of a Demoness of Pleasure, entangling Admiral Deep Sea layer by layer.

Faced with this restricted situation, Howl Constantine stopped and let the translucent octopus on his face glow with dawn-like brilliance.

The light suddenly exploded into countless fragments, sweeping through the captain's cabin like a storm.

The long table with food shattered into pieces, the metal walls were marked with deep scratches, and Franca and Jenna's figures shattered into countless mirror fragments again, while the invisible spider silk broke inch by inch, unable to restrain Howl Constantine any longer.

In the corridor, away from the captain's cabin door, Anthony was unaffected by the light storm, as was Lumian outlined beside him.

Lumian placed his hand on the metal sliding door of the staircase, using his contractual ability.

He enclosed the area within the Bottle of Fiction, with the entry and exit condition being female.

This effectively blocked any rescue attempts by the pirates, preventing interference in their battle. Except for teams with female captains, most pirate ships had very few female Beyonders, if any at all. The non-Beyonder women on board were merely ship prostitutes, incapable of becoming regular pirates.

...

Outside the Carnival Bar.

The real pirates, the disguised Mason, and the rest simultaneously noticed that the glass windows no longer reflected the scene of Great Shark Jörg and the others fighting the unknown adventurer.

The glass appeared dim, showing the bar's interior with no bartender or customers.

"What happened?" a pirate asked loudly, uncertainly.

"What ability was used?" Similar questions echoed.

They all suspected the unknown adventurer was behind the changes, as Great Shark and his crew wouldn't hide their fight; they would want to showcase their strength to more pirates.

Within the Bottle of Fiction.

Great Shark Jörg, wearing black gloves, was surrounded by signs of explosions and charred marks.

He had timely distorted the unknown adventurer's attack intent, avoiding injury in the recent bombardment.

However, his companion, Ship Destroyer, another Beyonder of the Hunter pathway, had long been unconscious from a combination of Beyonder powers and explosion damage.

The other pirates were also scattered, none unscathed.

Gazing at the unknown black-haired, blue-eyed adventurer several meters away, Great Shark Jörg cursed the teleportation ability.

Just as he was about to shift positions and attempt a Bribe, the handsome adventurer's figure rapidly faded like a projection and disappeared.

Worried it was another teleportation, Great Shark Jörg dove to the side, turning to look behind him.

Nothing happened.

Jörg and the remaining pirates, suspicious and tense, maneuvered cautiously multiple times, but the adventurer never reappeared.

Finally, the bald Great Shark began to grasp the situation.

That was just an illusion?

We fought an illusion and nearly lost?

Where did the real one go?

Realizing this, Great Shark Jörg blurted out, "Sh*t! The Newins!"

The unknown adventurer's real target was the Newins and the Admiral!

Jörg and the others grew anxious but were trapped in the Bottle of Fiction, unable to get out.

After trying several methods and abilities without success, they resorted to violent disassembly.

...

Aboard the Newins.

As the light storm began to subside, Jenna quickly appeared behind Admiral Deep Sea, in a blind spot created by his own body.

Then, using all her strength, she stabbed a dagger covered in silent black flames into Howl Constantine's back.

Although he couldn't turn or redirect the trident in time, Howl Constantine remained unfazed.

From his cloak emerged a silver-white lightning bolt that struck Jenna at a speed too fast to dodge.

Countless tiny electric serpents coursed over Jenna's body, but she seemed largely unharmed and only slightly slowed.

Pfft!

The dagger covered in black flames pierced Howl Constantine's black cloak.

At the beginning of the fight, Jenna had thrown a Louis d'or at Howl Constantine, not to seek luck but to activate the Decency brooch, completing a Bribe that significantly weakened his attacks, defenses, and controls against her for a while!

Since then, neither the rampaging lightning nor the light storm had affected her as much as she let on.

Her frantic dodging and use of the Mirror Substitution were meant to psychologically deceive Admiral Deep Sea!

She didn't expect Howl Constantine to be unaware of the Bribe ability, given that his deputy was likely a Briber. Instead, she performed as if the Bribe had failed, leading him to attribute the Louis d'or toss to another ability.

At the start, Howl Constantine might still have guarded against the Bribe, but in the heat of battle, and with time running short, he instinctively responded without caution.

Thus, he ignored the Bribe from before and didn't stop Jenna's assassination!

With a pfft, the black-flamed dagger pierced Howl Constantine's cloak and flesh.

Acting was for a better assassination!

After the successful strike, Jenna felt a strong resistance and wriggling flesh as if alive, preventing further progress with the dagger despite her full strength.

She abandoned force, instead channeling the black flames into Howl Constantine's body.

As the black flames surged, Admiral Deep Sea howled in pain.

Franca seized the opportunity to reach Howl Constantine's side, stabbing the transparent Wintry Blade into Admiral Deep Sea.

The Wintry Blade pierced the skin and flesh but couldn't go deeper into Howl Constantine's body.

But it was enough.

Howl Constantine's body stiffened as if frozen, and his thoughts became sluggish.

Franca slid to Jenna's side, retracting the Wintry Blade.

Simultaneously, she flipped out a compact mirror with her left hand, reflecting Howl Constantine's body.

Then, with her right hand, she smeared black flames on the mirror's surface.

Demoness' curse!

Black flames erupted from Howl Constantine's body, burning it but not touching the octopus on his face.

Howl Constantine let out a pained shriek, breaking free from the stiffness and mental fog, slamming the obsidian trident onto the metal floor.

Blinding lightning burst forth.

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Chapter 786 Face

786 Face

Arcs of silver lightning shot from the obsidian trident, turning the entire captain's cabin into a hell of electricity.

Despite having Bribed Howl Constantine and weakened his attacks, Jenna didn't dare risk her fragile body against the powerful lightning at such close range.

She and Franca shattered into pieces amid the dancing arcs, reflecting the blinding light.

Their figures reappeared at the cabin door, where lightning still raged.

Franca didn't hesitate. She grabbed Jenna's arm and activated the last gem on her Seven-Stone Bracelet before the paralysis set in.

Blink!

They vanished from the cabin door, blinking to a wooden table in a room diagonally opposite.

During this process, Franca and Jenna saw metal panels sliding open on the cabin ceiling, revealing several dark holes.

With a splash, blue seawater poured into the captain's cabin like a waterfall, and the metal door shut tight.

When Franca and Jenna's figures reappeared, their bodies still crackled with residual electricity, and they trembled uncontrollably.

Immediately, the last gem on the Seven-Stone Bracelet shattered, leaving only the two diamonds representing Teleport.

In the corridor near the stairwell, Lumian and Anthony remained unharmed by the electric storm.

It wasn't because the lightning hadn't spread through the metal floor and walls but because Lumian had taken out the gray-white lightning-shaped brooch Fury of the Sea from his Traveler's Bag and thrown it ahead.

One of its side effects was that it had a high chance of attracting lightning during storms.

This meant that it greatly attracted lightning!

As expected, most of the small electric arcs converged on Fury of the Sea, making it bloom like a bright silver flower.

Thus, Lumian and Anthony only felt a mild tingling, retaining their ability to move.

Looking at the now-closed cabin door, Lumian raised an eyebrow and murmured, "Did Howl Constantine get seriously injured in the last attack and decide to seal the cabin to recover?"

To Lumian, Admiral Deep Sea's response wasn't wrong. If possible, it was indeed one of the best choices under the circumstances, especially since Howl Constantine couldn't gauge the strength of Lumian, who had been merely watching and not acting, nor did he know the full extent of Franca, Jenna, and Anthony's abilities. If faced with something like a Banshee's terrifying scream, Howl Constantine-having been weakened by a Demoness's black flames-would likely die instantly.

But sealing the cabin to recover was precisely what Lumian and his companions hoped for. They hadn't planned to kill Howl Constantine before the Fate Exchange was complete. This quiet waiting scenario was exactly what they wanted.

"Watch out for secret passages in the cabin. Howl Constantine might escape or jump into the sea," Franca cautioned Lumian as she recovered.

She had rich experience in assassinations.

"I'm keeping an eye on it," Lumian replied concisely, picking up the Fury of the Sea.

He was monitoring the Fate Exchange situation and his own senses and spirituality.

If Admiral Deep Sea showed any signs of fleeing, Lumian would immediately blow open the cabin door.

As long as he didn't directly attack Howl Constantine, the Fate Exchange wouldn't be interrupted!

Franca's hands still trembled slightly, and she exuded a faint burnt smell as she remarked, "Howl Constantine's lightning strikes and Spirit Body and mental protection from items almost ruined all our efforts, along with this unique environment.

"If not for our abundance of mystical items and our good teamwork, we might have been forced to give up the plan and have you join the battle personally.

"What's the phrase? 'An unstoppable force overcomes all obstacles.' No matter what supernatural abilities you use, I'll counter with lightning and turn it into a weaker version of a lightning storm using the environment."

Jenna, who was also trembling and smelled burnt but was in better shape, nodded slightly in agreement.

As the one fighting on the front lines, she deeply understood this.

Outside the Carnival Bar, the pirates and disguised pirates saw the heavy wooden door suddenly swell and shatter.

Boom!

An explosion followed, sending the doorframe and fragments flying.

The figures of Great Shark Jorg and his men finally appeared to the onlookers.

Most of them were injured to varying degrees, their expressions grim, as they sprinted towards the dock without bothering to disguise themselves.

Seeing this, both real and fake pirates had similar thoughts.

They lost?

Even with all of Admiral Deep Sea's top men, they lost?

Are they running to seek help from Admiral Deep Sea?

They're fleeing in such a sorry state...

As thoughts raced through their minds, the onlookers turned their gaze back to the inside of the Carnival Bar. They saw broken tables and chairs, exploded barrels, and the mingling scents of alcohol and scorch, but no sign of the unknown adventurer.

This left the pirates and impostors bewildered, unsure of what it meant.

In the sealed captain's cabin, now filled with blue seawater, Howl Constantine's cloaked body floated, bubbles constantly rising.

His face, with the translucent octopus, hung slightly down, gazing at the submerged metal floor, feeling his soul being nourished, quickly shaking off his weakened state.

After several seconds, Howl Constantine slowly but steadily raised his head, looking at the closed metal door.

Outside, Lumian turned to Franca and said, "It's almost done. Stand by the door and show your face. If Howl Constantine sees the real face of a Demoness of

Pleasure, he might feel extreme pleasure, which will help with the digestion."

"This is so weird..." Franca muttered as she moved to stand opposite the captain's cabin door, leaning against the metal wall.

She pulled down her hood, revealing her radiant and beautiful face.

She wanted to strike a pose but couldn't bring herself to do it under everyone's eyes!

Lumian, calculating the progress, walked to the door of the captain's cabin and placed his hands on the metal.

White-hot flames instantly gathered, compressing layer by layer into the metal door.

Rumble!

The metal door rapidly caved inwards and then exploded.

With a splash, the blue seawater gushed out, momentarily driven back by the explosion's shockwave.

Howl Constantine's figure emerged before Lumian, Franca, and the others, a hopeful smile playing on his lips.

Taking advantage of the respite, he had activated the Newins' defense system. He was ready to fight the four assassins with the help of this alchemical ship.

In that state, he was confident he could hold his own against even a demigod for a while!

This was the main reason he hadn't jumped into the sea when the cabin door closed.

Suddenly, he saw an exceptionally beautiful face and a figure-despite partially covered by leather armor-that radiated allure.

He was momentarily stunned.

At that moment, Howl Constantine's mind buzzed, going blank.

That emptiness was immediately filled with extreme pleasure, which erupted, seemingly shattering his soul and scattering it in all directions.

He froze in place, his blood staining the blue seawater that hadn't yet flowed out of the cabin.

Tears streamed from his eyes, mixing with the seawater.

They were tears of pain and tears of joy.

Silently, the translucent octopus fell from Howl Constantine's face, revealing his true visage.

It was a handsome face, but the features were not deep, rather soft.

Seeing this, Franca's heart suddenly raced.

This face bore a striking resemblance to the man she had encountered in the Trier catacombs, Harrison, who was suspected to be from Resurrection Island.

Not in detailed appearance, but in style.

It was an "Eastern-style" face, but not purely so, more like a mixed heritage!

Stunned, Franca heard an illusory sound of something shattering and felt the complete digestion of the Pleasure potion.

She saw an illusory starry sky filled with twinkling stars.

Lumian was about to kill the severely injured Howl Constantine when he suddenly sensed the environment becoming extremely dangerous. He heard the mechanical sounds of the entire Newins' mechanism activating.

It was like a killing machine awakening.

Lumian didn't hesitate. He reached out, grabbing Franca and Jenna's shoulders, and lifted the Bottle of Fiction.

Anthony stepped forward, grabbing Lumian's clothes.

The four of them quickly disappeared from the corridor outside the captain's cabin.

They teleported back to the motel in Banamo Port.

Soon, the pirates near the dock noticed the Newins retract its masts and sails, sealing itself up and submerging into the sea.

Great Shark Jorg and his men hadn't even reached the dock!

Fleeing?

Admiral Deep Sea just fled?

He didn't even fight the adventurer, just ran, leaving behind his first mate, second mate, and boatswain?

Various thoughts surged in the minds of the pirates near the dock.

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Chapter 787 Magic Mirror Divination's Answers

787 Magic Mirror Divination's Answers

When Great Shark Jörg and his men arrived at the dock, the spot where the Newins had been moored was now empty, with only the gentle ripples of blue water moving softly in the light fog.

At that moment, Jörg and the other pirates stood frozen, as if they were staring at a surreal painting beyond their imagination.

Soon, a deep panic gripped them.

The Admiral fled on the Newins. What do we do now?

If that unknown adventurer couldn't kill the Admiral and let him escape, will he turn his attention to us for revenge?

He used illusions to deal with us; he must have really come to hunt the Admiral...

Their thoughts raced, and Great Shark Jörg and his men turned and ran, fleeing the dock area.

They needed to find the Newins' contacts in Banamo Port, relying on their local knowledge to find a secret place to hide and then contact Admiral Deep Sea to decide their next steps.

...

Inside the captain's cabin of the Newins.

Howl Constantine, having donned his translucent octopus mask again, stared at the nearly lightless, swaying seawater outside the thick glass window, feeling his internal and external wounds gradually healing with the help of medicinal potions.

He couldn't help but recall his recent encounter. Though it was extremely painful, it brought him an unprecedented pleasure, leaving his soul almost completely blank.

The joy it gave him far surpassed that of the women brought to the ship, making him want to experience it again despite his strong will.

Phew... Howl Constantine exhaled, grateful that he had activated the Newins' defense system in time. Otherwise, under the influence of that extreme pleasure, he would have been easily killed in the next second.

He believed the assassins had felt the Newins become extremely dangerous, leading them to retreat and flee the alchemical ship without pursuing him further.

He did not regret not activating the defense system earlier; being caught off guard, he had no time to do so.

What puzzled Howl Constantine now was when the seed of pleasure had been planted in him, causing an explosive reaction upon seeing the true face and figure of that Demoness.

He muttered to himself, Is that why the male assassin never attacked?

Not that he didn't want to, but he couldn't, not until the pleasure seed had fully rooted in my soul?

What are their true intentions beyond assassinating me? Are they after the secrets of the Newins and the Lost Newins?

Lacking the necessary clues, Admiral Deep Sea found it hard to make a decisive judgment and could only suppress his emotions for now, planning to contact his subordinates in Banamo Port once his body and soul had fully recovered to check if they had noticed anything unusual.

Instinctively, he reviewed the recent events, trying to find investigative details. But removing the true intentions of the assassins made the whole affair seem like a deliberate setup by two Demonesses and their companions to give him an ultimate pleasure, with the near-death experience being a normal part of it. In this world, many have died from pleasure without being attacked.

Reflecting on this, Howl Constantine noticed a shiny gold Louis d'or at the cabin door.

It was left by the two Demonesses.

Staring at the water at the doorstep and the gold coin, which had clearly been treated to prevent tracking, Howl Constantine suddenly had a ridiculous thought and fell into an indescribable silence.

...

In the motel room rented by Lumian and company in Banamo Port.

Jenna quickly removed the Scotch Broom-like Decency brooch and submerged it in the aluminum military flask Lumian had given her.

Almost simultaneously, Jenna felt the eyes of Lumian, Franca, and Anthony change significantly.

Their gazes now held undisguised disgust, aversion, and malice.

Jenna had felt malice from some people in the bars and dance halls of Trier's Rue Pasteur, but it was often mixed with desire and longing, unlike the pure hatred and loathing now directed at her.

Of course, Jenna also noticed a certain amount of desire in Franca's disgust and aversion, as if she wanted to satisfy herself by domineering over Jenna.

Lumian, though his expression remained relatively normal, had a change in his eyes, reflecting an Ascetic's endurance.

He nodded at Jenna and said, "The Decency brooch's negative effect has taken hold. Go to the next room for an hour."

"I know." Jenna glanced at Lumian, recalling past events.

Back then, she had been tasked with protecting Lumian under the negative effect of the Decency brooch, and she had felt the urge to beat him up.

She regretted not taking the chance to draw piles of dogsh*t on his face.

Recalling these memories, Jenna smiled slightly, left the room, and went to wait for the negative effect to wear off in the next room.

"Phew, the Decency brooch's negative effect is really strong..." Franca commented sincerely.

Lumian gave her a sidelong glance and laughed.

"I think your hatred and disgust weren't pure enough."

Franca immediately felt embarrassed, awkwardly smiling as she said, "Sometimes, hatred and disgust can also spark desire. Just ask Anthony!"

Before Lumian could turn to him, Anthony spoke up, "It's true. The human brain and soul are complex. Different people might develop the same desire from different stimuli.

"Some get pleasure from pain, others from jealousy, breaking taboos, being scolded or tortured, or sharing with others, gaining their affection. The possibilities are endless."

"In simple terms, the world is full of perverts?" Lumian mocked Franca.

Franca didn't take the bait, her expression growing serious as she frowned slightly.

Once free from the Decency brooch's negative effect, she recalled the scene she had witnessed earlier.

After some thought, she said, "Do you think Admiral Deep Sea's real appearance resembles Harrison from Resurrection Island?"

Lumian recalled and said, "You mean they both have noticeable Eastern features?"

He had seen Franca's drawing of Harrison.

"Yes, but more like a mix of someone like Harrison and an Intisian or person from the North Continent," Franca said thoughtfully.

Because Anthony was present, she didn't mention the transmigration matter, instead steering towards Resurrection Island.

With a nod, Lumian replied, "Draw Howl Constantine's portrait, and we'll write to the Tarot Club Major Arcana card holders."

"No need to ask Madam Judgment or Madam Magician yet; I'll try with Magic Mirror Divination first," Franca responded immediately.

She began preparing the ritual in the room, sketching Howl Constantine's features from memory. This included an appearance similar to Resurrection Island residents, slightly pointed ears, dark blue near-black thick hair, and the tentacle-like dark veins on his hands when holding the obsidian trident.

Some details Franca hadn't noticed during the fight were now retrieved from her memory through the ritual.

Lumian examined the portrait for a moment and said, "It does have an Eastern style."

Franca nodded, then busied herself with the Magic Mirror Divination.

Soon, the mirror on the desk turned dark, with faint sounds of water echoing within.

Franca picked up the portrait of Admiral Deep Sea and asked the target of the Magic Mirror Divination, "What does this appearance signify?"

She didn't directly ask about Howl Constantine's origins, fearing it was beyond the Magic Mirror Divination's knowledge.

A hoarse, elderly voice emerged from the mirror: "This is an elf."

An elf? Lumian's temples throbbed.

This was a legendary Beyonder race!

Previously, Lumian had only known of elves as a mythical race from ancient times, living on the Sonia Sea's Sonia Island. He learned they were powerful, with their queen, Soniathrym, being one of the eight ancient gods, ruling the sky and sea.

In the real world, encountering a true elf since the Fifth Epoch was rare, only seeing occasional descendants with diluted bloodlines.

Franca was equally shocked, blurting out, "An elf, or a half-elf mixed with humans?"

"Half-elf," the hoarse voice responded.

Though a half-elf, Howl Constantine's features show a strong elven bloodline... In theory, the Sequence 5 Ocean Songster shouldn't cause such changes... A half-elf? Could the elves be descendants of transmigrators, living and thriving in this world? Elf legends date back to the Second Epoch... Franca thought deeply, almost forgetting to ask the third question.

Gathering her thoughts, she pondered for a few seconds and asked, "Is the Lost Newins an ancient elven relic?"

Though elves supposedly lived on Sonia Island in ancient times, they once ruled the seas, so leaving relics in other seas was plausible.

Yes, if Howl Constantine is a pure-blooded half-elf, it makes sense he wore a mask to disguise as a sea monster. The Church of the Lord of Storms supposedly hates pure-blooded elves...

The elderly voice in the mirror answered Franca's third question, "I don't know."

"Alright..." Franca ended the Magic Mirror Divination and fell into a long silence.

She suddenly regretted using Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine merely to digest the Pleasure potion this time. Instead of training the team and exchanging fate, they should have gotten Lumian to strike fully with their support to see if they could capture the elf alive.

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Chapter 788 Realizations

788 Realizations

Seeing the Magic Mirror Divination come to an end, Lumian turned his gaze to Anthony.

"The Newins has definitely fled. Go out and gather information from the pirates. Find out if Great Shark Jörg and the key crew members managed to board the ship. If they didn't, find out where they are now."

"Understood." Anthony knew Lumian wanted to quickly determine the whereabouts of Great Shark Jörg and his men to see if they could use them to "visit" the Newins again and learn about the elves and the true nature of the Lost Newins.

Lumian couldn't go himself; the pirates would avoid him, and even if he forced the information out of them, it would alert Great Shark Jörg and his men if they were still in Banamo Port, making them hide deeper.

Disguising himself wouldn't work either; the pirates wouldn't be friendly or forthcoming.

The same applied to Franca.

Only Anthony, who had befriended many pirates, could naturally obtain the needed intel.

After watching Anthony leave the room, Franca sat down at the desk with a sigh and said, "This whole transmigration thing keeps getting more complicated."

"You used to treat it too simply," Lumian scoffed.

Franca didn't argue, staying silent for a moment before changing the subject.

"I've fully digested the Pleasure potion. After a few days of rest, I'll be ready to attempt the Demoness of Affliction ritual."

"Honestly, it feels like a dream. Have I really digested it?"

She still seemed somewhat incredulous.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"What else were you expecting? If Admiral Deep Sea knew our main goal was to help you digest the Pleasure potion, he'd think the world was absurd. He'd wonder if it was necessary and suggest that with a Demoness of Pleasure's conditions, we could have just asked for his help with a notarized agreement to prevent harm, and he'd happily assist."

"It's just hard for me to accept..." Franca muttered. "And I know what you mean. In our world, plenty would say, 'Helping a Demoness of Pleasure digest a potion is too wicked-please let me help,' but that's superficial pleasure and low-quality digestion. Real pleasure comes from experiencing it in pain and sinking into it. Targeting people like Moran Avigny and Howl Constantine aligns more with the essence of the Demoness path."

Lumian was just joking and didn't continue the topic.

Franca was silent for a while, then looked at Lumian and carefully said, "About your plan to spread a plague among the pirates in Banamo Port -I don't think it's viable."

"Why?" Lumian raised an eyebrow, amused.

Franca straightened, her gaze unwavering.

"I don't think we can completely separate the guilty pirates from innocent bystanders. The plague would inevitably affect the latter, causing them to die in despair."

Lumian chuckled. "It was just a concept, a direction. We can refine the plan to address those concerns, and if it's not feasible, we can abandon it. We can't limit our thinking right from the start.

"For example, by then, I might be a demigod and find a high-level replacement for the Bottle of Fiction, capable of containing all of Banamo Port with conditions allowing only pirates to enter or exit."

"No," Franca shook her head. "There are adventurers who moonlight as pirates, and many of them haven't committed crimes deserving death."

Lumian smiled and sighed.

"Then we'll collaborate with the Aurora Order or find a Sequence 5 artifact from the Broker path to identify guilty targets."

Franca seriously thought for a moment.

"That won't work either. We have our own crimes. Many adventurers have killed pirates. Does that count as guilty?"

Lumian was momentarily speechless, then laughed.

"You really are suited for switching to Provoker.

"I was just raising examples; my point being that a plan shouldn't be dismissed outright. We need to analyze its feasibility and consider future changes."

"Okay." Franca expressed her opinion and sighed quietly.

After some thought, she decided to speak frankly to Lumian, "Since discovering the vortex plan, you've become more aggressive, like when you first came to Trier. Or is it the Devil's Whispers from Hisoka that's constantly stirring your malice? The Traveler's Bag only mitigates its influence; it doesn't completely eliminate the negative effects."

Lumian chuckled, somewhat self-deprecatingly. "It's a bit of both."

He then grew serious.

"But more importantly, I've come to some realizations."

"What realizations?" Franca asked, puzzled.

Lumian nodded. "I was going to remind you anyway. You've been a Demoness for a long time. Haven't you noticed the inherent nature of this pathway?"

Franca fell silent.

Lumian continued in a low voice. "Like the Hunter pathway, it inevitably brings catastrophe and calamity. We are destined to belong to darkness and represent destruction.

"Think about it. What's the general perception of Hunters and Demonesses among Beyonders? Danger. Hunters are seen as bloody dangers, and Demonesses as evil dangers. We can't escape this impression, nor can we deny it.

"The subsequent potion digestion and advancement rituals will push us deeper into darkness unless you choose to stop advancing and remain where you are. Otherwise, we'll face challenges that test our very souls.

"You could consider switching paths, but your only option would be the Hunter pathway."

Seeing Franca's expression change but still remaining silent, Lumian suddenly laughed.

"What I'm trying to say is, give up on purity; don't shy away from darkness and evil. We need to confront these things. Only then can we find ways to avoid evil and discover the light within the darkness. We will all be tainted by darkness.

"We are stained black; we must strive not to fall, not to betray our inner principles."

Franca was silent for a while before sighing deeply.

"Affliction and Despair give me bad premonitions. But walking in darkness, seeking light within it-won't we be corrupted bit by bit and eventually fall completely?"

Lumian chuckled. "Do we have any other choice? We can only keep fighting our own darkness and evil until we die."

Franca tersely acknowledged his words and expressed her thoughts, "Actually, all Beyonders are like this. The paths of gods are inherently dangerous and inevitably lead to madness. Hunters and Demonesses just make it more obvious and direct."

She couldn't imagine the struggles and pain if she had chosen the Devil pathway.

When the negative effects of Jenna's Decency brooch wore off, Anthony returned and briefed Lumian and the others on the current situation in Banamo Port.

The Newins had indeed fled, and Great Shark Jörg and his men hadn't boarded and were now missing.

In the following two days, Lumian and his team disguised themselves and searched Banamo Port for the first mate, second mate, and boatswain of the Newins. However, they found no significant leads, whether through social investigation or mystical tracking. Instead, they discovered some suspected associates of Admiral Deep Sea had also disappeared.

Lumian suspected Great Shark Jörg and his men had left Banamo Port through some secret means. Whether they returned to the Newins remained unknown.

...

In Trier, in an apartment in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Angoulême de Francois set up a ritual and summoned the messenger of the Seven of Cups.

He saw a rabbit-shaped Spirit Body emerge from the flames, dressed in an odd manner: a miniature silk top hat between its ears, tiny gold-rimmed glasses on its nose, a black trench coat clearly not meant for a rabbit, and holding an iron-black revolver sized for a large rabbit.

The messenger of Hidden Blade is quite cute, with a unique style... Who knew she would dress her messenger like this... Angoulême picked up the prewritten letter and handed it to the adorably dressed rabbit messenger.

The rabbit gave him a cold, sharp glance.

Um... Angoulême retracted his previous thoughts.

...

In one of the motel rooms rented by Lumian and company in Banamo Harbor, Franca read Angoulême's letter and said with some difficulty, "007 has a lead on the Mirror People and wants us to follow up, but we still haven't found Great Shark Jörg."

She was more interested in the secrets of the elves than the Mirror People.

Lumian leaned back, relaxed, and said, "The worst-case scenario is that Great Shark Jörg and his men have already returned to the Newins through secret means. We won't get any results staying here.

"So, let's leave. Once the alert is lifted, those people might come out.

Meanwhile, we can make long-term plans to keep an eye on Banamo Port. Maybe the Newins will return for supplies."

"Agreed," Franca accepted reality.

At that moment, Jenna noticed a problem: Rabbit Chasel was still in the room.

She hadn't paid it for delivering the message.

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Chapter 789 At the Stake

789 At the Stake

Jenna observed Rabbit Chasel, who increasingly resembled Gehrman Sparrow, and carefully asked, "What do you need this time?"

One of the later volumes of The Great Adventurer? Or something else?

Luckily, few people knew about her messenger, and Rabbit Chasel didn't deliver messages frequently. Otherwise, Jenna would have to consider providing different knowledge.

Rabbit Chasel lowered its paw holding the revolver and said in a thoughtful tone, "Get me a pair of boxing gloves that a rabbit can wear."

What kind of request is that? Lumian said with a chuckle, "I don't remember Gehrman Sparrow ever wearing boxing gloves."

This imitation doesn't quite fit the persona!

"True, but Gehrman Sparrow has Blazing Danitz. I need my own Danitz. I want to develop one in our community," Rabbit Chasel explained earnestly. "Danitz uses boxing gloves."

For a moment, Franca, Jenna, and Lumian didn't know how to respond.

After several seconds, Jenna nodded and said, "I'll have a pair custom-made for you. Mm, normal Rabbit of Knowledge size, not your size?"

"That's right." Rabbit Chasel raised its right hand, blew on the small revolver's muzzle, satisfied.

But... this gesture isn't fitting for the current scene... Franca noticed that Rabbit Chasel was still an immature Rabbit of Knowledge, mimicking and repeating much without truly mastering it.

...

In the darkness of Banamo Port, only a few street lamps with candles flickered. Pirates gathered in bars, drinking heavily or going upstairs with women, enjoying pleasures unavailable at sea.

With the Newins gone and the unknown adventurer disappeared, the pirates gradually put the incident behind them. After all, everyone felt embarrassed; no

one would ridicule another.

As pirates, they knew they might die in a storm, during a robbery, or in a mutiny on their next voyage. Dwelling on past problems was meaningless; indulging in the present was the only option.

Of course, they also talked about the unknown adventurer's strength and what had happened inside the Newins, wondering why Admiral Deep Sea fled in such a hurry.

"I think that adventurer was waiting for Admiral Deep Sea!"

"Does he want to recreate Gehrman Sparrow's great feats?"

"Pui! Son of a bitch. What great feats? We're pirates!"

"He succeeded but didn't completely succeed? He defeated Admiral Deep Sea but let him escape?"

"Is he close to the power of the Kings?"

"What's happening on the sea? Every so often, a powerful adventurer appears! There was that Louis Berry before, too."

"..."

Disguised as a non-pirate, Mason mingled in several bars, listening to the pirates discuss recent events, hoping they'd start a fight.

On his way to the next bar, Mason turned into a quieter alley and saw a figure standing ahead, seemingly waiting for him.

The figure had black hair and blue eyes, with sharp features and a handsome face. It was the same unknown adventurer who had challenged all the pirates in Banamo Port and forced Admiral Deep Sea to flee.

Mason suddenly heard his heart pounding and blurted out, "I'm not a pirate!"

Lumian strolled forward and smiled. "I have a task for you."

Hearing this, Mason relaxed a bit and carefully said, "What can I do for you? I'm not sure if my abilities can meet your needs."

He feared that while completing the task might be easy, the aftermath could be problematic-pirates might hack him to pieces once the adventurer left.

Lumian said bluntly, "It's a simple and secret task. Keep an eye on Banamo Port. As soon as the Newins returns or you spot Great Shark Jörg and his men, summon my messenger immediately."

Hearing "messenger," Mason was suddenly struck by a thought.

He remembered his last task: summoning a terrifying messenger through a ritual!

Unable to control his expression, Mason asked in slight terror, "Are you Lumian Lee, sir?"

The master of that terrifying messenger?

"Perceptive," Lumian replied, not too sincerely.

Mason connected the recent events in his mind: Was the reaI purpose of that task to bring Lumian Lee to Banamo Port?

And Lumian Lee's goal was to deal with Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, for the Lost Newins?

My spiritual intuition was partly correct; the ritual indeed brought something bad to Banamo Port, though it didn't turn into a catastrophe...

Lumian continued, "The payment is 5000 verl d'or."

The task is indeed simple, and I likely wouldn't be discovered by the pirates. The reward is generous... If I refused, knowing the task details might bring trouble... After weighing it for over ten seconds, Mason said, "No problem, I think I can handle this task."

Lumian nodded slightly, paid a 1000-verl d'or deposit, and turned to leave the quiet alley.

Watching Lumian's figure disappear into the darkness, Mason silently repeated his name, "Lumian Lee, Lumian Lee..."

Mason finally remembered where he had heard the name: on a wanted poster aboard a ship!

The poster described Lumian Lee as a survivor of a sacrificial ritual to an evil god that destroyed a village, severely corrupted by the evil god.

...

In Trier, in the prison district, at the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

Returning to Trier for two days, Franca, feeling ready for the Demoness of Affliction advancement ritual, decided to proceed.

007's lead on the Mirror People came from an ore scholar of the Trier Cave Association. The Purifiers had planned to investigate all the association's ore scholars, but one had mysteriously disappeared before they could visit. Recently, someone had seen her in Underground Trier, suspected to be Palia, a Mirror Person.

Franca looked at the stake and sighed sincerely, "When I became a witch, I wondered if I'd end up burned at the stake. Who knew, I have to tie myself up here."

As she spoke, she took out the brown-red wooden suitcase given by Demoness of Black Clarice from the Traveler's Bag and unlocked the metal clasp.

Next, she retrieved a red wine glass, crushed the crystalline ice containing potion ingredients, and poured in Flower-Faced Bat blood and human blood from a seriously ill person. Both were dark red, and when combined, they turned almost black.

She then added the Flower-Faced Bat's head, a Two-Tailed Black Snake's gallbladder and tail tip, and ten drops of Enfinitas Eucalyptus essential oil.

As the ingredients were added, the dark red blood in the glass turned pitch black, with occasional nauseating green bubbles.

"It's like a cup of untreated sewage," Lumian commented honestly.

"Dammit! Shut up!" Franca grew more disgusted as she looked at the Demoness of Affliction potion.

She handed the potion to Lumian and lightly jumped onto the stake, tying herself up with Jenna's help.

During this, Franca muttered, "Damn, this feels so weird..."

She adjusted her mindset for several seconds and nodded to Lumian, "I'm ready."

Lumian handed the potion to Jenna and extended his right palm.

A ball of crimson-white flames flew out, landing on Franca, who immediately felt pain. Her body instinctively wanted to dodge and contract, but the ropes held her firmly.

Jenna quickly jumped to her side, one hand holding the ropes and the other bringing the potion to her mouth.

Franca forced herself to gulp down the pathogen-like dark-green potion.

Whether from the flames or the potion, her head quickly grew hot, and her mind became fuzzy from the heat.

She involuntarily recalled past pleasures, including her own experiences and the feedback from her partners.

At that moment, Franca was both the giver and receiver of pleasure, drowning in it from body to soul, almost dissolving like spring water.

Her thoughts drifted, her will sank, and her self was lost in various intense pleasures.

However, the pain accompanying those pleasures kept her slightly conscious. It was the mental resistance and spiritual conflict with Gardner Martin, the emotional gap with Jenna, as if they could never truly unite body and soul...

The extreme pain from the burning flames on her body was like invisible threads pulling her self and consciousness, making her sway like a kite in a storm, not completely out of control.

Swaying, Franca instinctively cursed in her mind:

Damn, it hurts so much!

This ritual is trying to kill me, isn't it?

Cough, cough, hot smoke in my throat and lungs, so uncomfortable. Am I dying...

Dammit, I can say I smell good now, like food, the scent of roasted meat...

Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony stood before the stake, watching Franca's body gradually turn black and her expression twist beyond beauty.

Even Lugano, ready to provide medical help, felt a bit heated, their minds wandering with certain thoughts and urges.

Facing this horrifying scene, they had inappropriate desires.

Fortunately, it wasn't severe and was bearable.

After several more seconds, the crimson flames on Franca's body turned pitch black, then into crystalline ice shards, falling off in pieces.

The shards took the charred skin with them, revealing Franca's new, tender, and glistening skin underneath.

Even with his Ascetic's endurance, Lumian instinctively looked away.

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Chapter 790 Charm

790 Charm

Not only did Lumian avoid looking at Franca, but Jenna and Anthony also instinctively turned their heads, as if evading a temptation that could pierce their hearts.

"Dammit, my clothes almost got burned up!

"Just one step away from running around naked!

"Thankfully, thankfully..."

Franca's cursing reached Lumian and the others' ears, bringing a sense of familiarity and dispelling the earlier temptations.

Franca then disappeared from sight, took out a set of clothes from the Traveler's Bag, and changed in a nearby secluded corner.

She then deactivated her invisibility, tied up her ponytail, and walked back to Lumian and the others.

"The beautifying effect is really impressive..." Franca took out a mirror, examined herself, and poked her cheek as if testing her skin's elasticity and smoothness.

Lumian chuckled and said, "Is that the only change the Affliction potion brought?"

Franca was about to speak when she suddenly remembered something and glanced at Lugano.

Lugano immediately said, "I need to go back and prepare dinner for Ludwig."

"Okay." Lumian nodded.

After Lugano left, Franca felt the changes in her body and spoke slowly, "Enhancing appearance, figure, and charm is just one aspect, and it's the least important. No, it's not unimportant, but it has little to do with becoming stronger. No, I remember someone saying beauty is part of a woman's power, just like handsomeness is part of a man's. Anyway, you get the idea. The other changes include Charm becoming an active ability instead of a passive state."

As a Beyonder in the Demoness pathway, Jenna easily understood Franca's meaning.

"Before, you showcased your appearance, figure, and aura, naturally enchanting anyone who saw you. Now, a glance, a gesture, a word can completely charm someone?"

"Yes," Franca said with a smile, "But combined with showcasing my appearance, figure, and aura, the active Charm ability will be more effective. Charmed enemies will hesitate to harm us, unable to use their full strength. Some might even give up resisting just to get closer to us.

In daily interactions, if Charm is used repeatedly on someone, they will truly fall in love with us over time."

Franca glanced at Lumian, her eyes twinkling.

She wanted to test the effect of Charm and see how it compared to the endurance of an Ascetic.

Lumian suddenly felt Franca's lake-blue eyes deepen, as if hiding countless words, and her fair, smooth skin seemed delicate enough to break with a touch.

An indescribable feeling surged within Lumian, causing him to curse aloud, "Dammit! Stop experimenting with your abilities here!"

Charm works well if it can make an Ascetic curse... Franca thought to herself, then said seriously, "It's just that I've just advanced, and the potion's power is leaking out, making it hard to control."

"Do you think I'll believe that?" Lumian retorted, realizing he felt unusually agitated.

For a Provoker, staying calm while provoking others was crucial.

Franca withdrew her gaze and continued explaining the Affliction potion's abilities, "The core ability is Plague. It can create various pathogens within a 30-meter range. Once I get used to the Affliction potion and truly master its power, this range can expand beyond 40 meters and eventually to 50 meters as the potion is digested.

"A Demoness of Affliction can create multiple pathogens, accelerating their infection and the onset of diseases. The initial ten seconds are the incubation period, followed by mild symptoms like allergies, fever, cough, and sneezing. The symptoms quickly worsen, leading to severe illnesses like pneumonia. In two to three minutes, the disease will become critical, potentially causing sudden death or incapacitation."

Done with explaining Plague, Franca excitedly envisioned, "This pairs well with an Assassin.

"Stealthily get within a few dozen meters of the target, silently spread pathogens to cover the area. When the target shows mild symptoms and realizes something is

wrong, strike as their strength decreases, their state affected, and many abilities disrupted. If the first strike fails, reposition and keep trying, dragging the target into severe illness.

"Plague should be something a Guardian's abilities can't defend against.

Their invisible barriers don't seem to block air. The people they protect can still breathe normally. I'm not sure if the barriers have a sterilizing function..."

"Heh heh, next time I face Admiral Deep Sea, I won't worry about his octopus mask. It seems to only protect the spirit and mind, maybe also making the body tougher and more resilient."

"It's indeed well-suited for assassination and prolonged fights," Lumian evaluated from a Hunter's perspective.

He pondered and asked, "Does the infection and onset time of Plague vary based on the target's constitution? Can the pathogens you create be burned by a Hunter's flames?"

He was recalling his battle with a bestowed from the Order of All Extinction.

"Of course, there's a difference. Undead creatures won't be infected unless I become a Demoness of Despair," Franca said introspectively. "I'm not sure if the pathogens can be burned by a Hunter's flames. Want to test it?"

"Sure." Lumian also wanted to confirm.

This could be useful if he ever faced a Demoness of Affliction.

Jenna and Anthony immediately distanced themselves, moving to the edge of the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

In the early winter night, Lumian's body suddenly ignited with brilliant white flames, spreading around and burning the air within a seven-to-eight-meter radius.

Franca stood over ten meters away, her lake-blue eyes deepening.

As the flames crackled, time passed, and Lumian gradually felt a discomfort in his throat, as if swallowing a foreign object, making him want to cough it out. His nose also felt sore and itchy.

Franca stopped the experiment and concluded, "Hunter's flames can indeed kill many pathogens created by a Demoness of Affliction, reducing the disease's impact. It took me about a minute to give you mild symptoms."

Lumian sneezed, coughed twice, and the white flames quickly dissipated.

When Jenna and Anthony returned, Franca continued, "A Demoness's webs have also been significantly enhanced. As a Demoness of Pleasure, I could only roughly control them to entangle and bind targets. Now, they're like extensions of my

arms, capable of more precise actions, like..."

Franca suddenly smiled.

"Tickling you!"

As she spoke, Lumian and Jenna felt something soft and invisible tickling their waists, causing a tingling sensation.

"Immature, haven't you grown up?" Lumian mocked, then added, "But it's useful in combat."

Franca withdrew the invisible webs, untied her ponytail, and let her hair fall.

Her flaxen-colored hair didn't drop but floated, each strand distinct and lively.

"Now, my hair is also a weapon," Franca proudly announced, "It can pierce skin, inject black flames, and cause stiffness in the contacted area, effective in close combat."

She let her hair down, tied it again, and took out a mirror.

"My curses are also stronger and more targeted. Before, I had to reflect the target's full image in a mirror to curse them with black flames. Now, I can reflect just a part of the body, affecting the corresponding area.

"My other abilities have also been enhanced, including black magic and mirror magic."

Jenna listened quietly and sincerely remarked, "Compared to a Demoness of Pleasure, this is a significant improvement."

"After all, it's Sequence 5," Franca said, feeling extremely pleased.

Seeing this, Lumian nodded slightly. "I won't be participating in the Mirror People investigation for now. I plan to leave for Lenburg tomorrow."

To find the City of Exiles, Morora!

He had been studying the Lenburg language and discovered it was essentially the same as the Feynapotter Kingdom's Highlander, with some dialectal differences- Lenburg split from Feynapotter after the Battle of the Violated Oath in the Fifth Epoch.

So, having learned Highlander, Lumian quickly mastered the Lenburg language in a few days.

"So soon? Well, you've digested the Reaper potion and need to consider advancing to demigod." Franca suddenly felt wistful.

Lumian glanced outside the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground and said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Take care of Ludwig for me and keep an eye on Lugano."

Based on the information from 0-01 and Madam Magician's hints, it was best for Lumian to go to Morora alone.

Initially, he considered taking Ludwig, his godson, but given his angelic nature and divinity, he might cause unnecessary changes in Morora. So, he abandoned the idea.

In comparison, Termiboros, sealed by Mr. Fool, could be temporarily ignored. Theoretically, He wouldn't trigger 0-01.

"Okay," Franca and the others responded to Lumian.

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Chapter 791 Capture

791 Capture

After dinner, Franca and Jenna returned to 9 Rue Orosai's Apartment 702.

"Finally, it worked." Franca raised her hands and stretched lazily. "Next, should we find Palia the Mirror Person first, report to the Demoness of Black, or tell her tomorrow morning that I've become a Demoness of Affliction? She said that once I advanced to Affliction, she would share some secrets of the Demoness Sect with me."

Franca was curious but also a bit fearful about knowing these secrets.

Additionally, she felt that her progress in digesting the Pleasure potion was much faster than expected, which might arouse the Demoness of Pleasure's suspicion. She didn't want to report anything related to Admiral Deep Sea yet.

This involved the secret of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's transmigration!

So far, Franca and Lumian had only mentioned Admiral Deep Sea's suspected connection to elves to their respective Arcana cards and had yet to receive any response.

Jenna thought for a moment and then said, "Even if you don't go to the Demoness of Black tomorrow, you should do it soon. The sooner we understand the Demoness Sect's secrets, the better we can plan our actions and avoid potential pitfalls."

Understanding Franca's concerns, she added with a smile, "Just tell the Demoness of Black that Lumian has become a Reaper and he helped you digest the Pleasure potion."

"Uh..." Franca was taken aback. "That's true, but the way you put it doesn't feel right..."

"That's exactly the kind of misunderstanding we need," Jenna replied with a soft smile.

She glanced out at the night sky and said, "Finding Palia should be enough with just you and Anthony. I want to visit Julien in Port LeSeur in the next few days. We haven't seen each other for almost two months, and I want to gauge his intentions, see if he really plans to return to Trier."

"Sure." Franca understood Jenna's concerns.

Jenna nodded. "I'll go home tonight, pack some things for him, and try to leave tomorrow morning. The sooner I go, the sooner I can come back."

There were plenty of steam locomotives and riverboats heading to Port LeSeur, so she didn't worry about not getting a ticket on the spot.

After a brief conversation, Jenna packed her luggage, took her suitcase, and left the apartment.

She hadn't followed Julien's instructions to cancel the lease on the Rue Pasteur apartment while he was away for his exchange program in Port LeSeur, saving money. She still occasionally stayed there, as if she had never left.

Watching Jenna leave, Franca felt a pang of disappointment and muttered, "I was hoping we could celebrate tonight..."

She walked slowly back to her bedroom and saw that some of Jenna's clothes and belongings had been taken away.

As she looked at the now tidier and cleaner bedroom, Franca seemed to understand something.

She fell silent.

She felt that the Affliction potion had been somewhat digested.

...

Chug, chug, chug.

A cream-colored steam train with brass patterns sped along the tracks, heading towards the capital of Lenburg, Azshara, nestled among the mountains.

Lumian sat in a second-class carriage, looking around leisurely.

Without coordinates for Azshara and unwilling to go through the messenger hassle again, he chose to teleport back to the Riston Province, take a steam train to the border, and then smuggle himself across the mountains.

With pre-exchanged Lenburg currency, knowledge of black market traders, and intermediaries, Lumian easily obtained new identification and bought a ticket to Azshara.

Lenburg was a small country, so he would reach his destination by the evening.

As Lumian observed, he noticed that Lenburg residents favored light-colored clothes and brass accessories, each carrying a book to read quietly during the journey. Even those who conversed did so in hushed tones.

At stops, passengers were eager to help elderly people or those dressed as scholars, showing heartfelt respect.

No wonder this is the land of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, Lumian silently mused.

Lenburg was a nation of single faith without a royal family, where the Church of Knowledge exerted strong control and influence over the country.

Perhaps sensing his gaze, the young man next to him, holding a book, glanced at Lumian's "Lenburg Travel Guide" and asked with a low laugh, "Are you a foreigner?"

He spoke in Lenburg, then switched to Highlander, Loenese, Intisian, and Feysac.

Lumian was a bit surprised.

A typical Lenburg second-class passenger knew so many languages?

Moreover, it felt like the man was showing off.

"Yes, I'm from Intis, and I speak Lenburg," Lumian replied cooperatively.

"What's your name? It's impressive you know all the North Continent languages."

The young man adjusted his light-framed glasses and smiled. "My name is Sallent, and I'm just a small company employee.

"Actually, once you learn one language from the North Continent, the others are easy. If you start with ancient Feysac, it's even simpler. We Lenburgers begin learning ancient Feysac in our compulsory education."

Sallent's tone carried a hint of pride, almost looking down on other countries still plagued by illiteracy and people who didn't know foreign languages.

In theory, yes, otherwise, I wouldn't have mastered Highlander so quickly. My Dutanese is just barely passable... Lumian didn't mind Sallent's slight arrogance.

The Lenburgers he met this morning all had a similar attitude.

Keeping his voice low, Lumian said with a smile, "You're quite civilized, showing great respect for the elderly and scholars, and reading on the train instead of chatting or playing."

Sallent replied with restrained pride, "In Lenburg, knowledge is the most precious, and scholars have more knowledge. Elders, throughout their lives, accumulate a lot of experiential knowledge."

Sallent let out a self-deprecating laugh. "Reading is a habit from childhood and a necessity. You wouldn't know that our lives are filled with exams and evaluations-

in school, in companies, and even in church, where we take theological tests during grand masses to show our piety and respect for the God of Knowledge."

Lumian suddenly felt this wasn't necessarily a good thing.

No wonder Ludwig is reluctant to return to the Church of Knowledge...

But Aurore would love it here. She wouldn't want to live here herself, but she'd certainly want to send me here to study...

Seeing the foreigner beside him fall silent, Sallent sighed and said, "That's why I didn't stay in Azshara after graduating. The pressure is overwhelming-qualification exams, annual competency reviews, monthly company evaluations, job training exams, and so on."

Lumian couldn't help but hiss internally.

So this is the daily life of Lenburgers, especially those in Azshara?

Ludwig's vague descriptions didn't prepare me for this. I thought only students had it hard...

Thank goodness Aurore took me in and not some Lenburger...

Talking about this made Sallent feel melancholic, prompting him to lower his head and return to his book.

Judging by the time, Lumian realized they were close to Azshara, so he started pondering the issue of the City of Exiles, Morora.

He hesitated and then asked Sallent, "Have you heard of a city called Morora?"

Sallent thought carefully and then replied, "No, neither in reality nor in any legends."

Lumian gave a noncommittal grunt and turned his gaze back to the quickly receding mountain scenery outside, as if their conversation was just casual small talk.

If Madam Magician couldn't find it, I probably can't either, unless I kidnap a demigod of the Church of Knowledge...

Since the Church of Knowledge placed parts of the Abscessed Hand in Morora, can I use the connection between the body parts to find the city?

The Church of Knowledge expects and allows me to go to Morora, perhaps even hoping for it. Will they give me a hint?

...

With these thoughts, Lumian grew more determined.

As dusk fell, the steam locomotive stopped at a platform paved with gray and white stone slabs.

Lumian, carrying a small suitcase, walked with Sallent through the station decorated with book sculptures and brass patterns.

The wind howled through the mountains, bringing cold but refreshing air.

As they approached the entrance of Azshara Steam Train Station, Lumian saw several clergy members from the Church of Knowledge in white robes trimmed with brass blocking the way, checking the documents of passengers.

"What's going on?" Lumian asked.

Sallent glanced over and casually replied, "Routine exit checks, done alternately by the Church and the government."

"I thought they might randomly stop people to test their knowledge," Lumian joked.

Sallent turned his head sharply, eyes filled with fear, as if to say: Are you a devil? Even the Church bishops wouldn't think of that!

Lumian shrugged and stepped forward to have his documents checked by the clergy.

The elder leading the group scrutinized Lumian, glanced at his documents, then signaled to the others.

Lumian was quickly surrounded by the clergy, all poised for action.

The elder stared at him and said sternly, "We've found a wanted criminal. Take him away!"

Uh... Lumian raised an eyebrow.

In a split second, he decided not to resist, extending his hands to let the clergy cuff him with silver handcuffs.

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Chapter 792 Judgment

792 Judgment

Inside the slow-moving carriage, Lumian, handcuffed and shackled, stared at the window with iron bars welded and covered with thick cloth.

His belief in his own judgment grew stronger.

When the clergy from the Church of Knowledge accused him of being a wanted criminal, his first reaction wasn't to be on guard but to feel a wave of confusion.

He sensed that those performing the routine exit check were there specifically for him. But apart from Ludwig and the 0-01 incident, he had no interaction with the Church of Knowledge and hadn't harmed their interests.

Why are you Lenburgers so enthusiastic about catching an Intisian criminal? Did you even verify the details and the target's current abilities?

As thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian, noticing Sallent's surprised, fearful yet relieved gaze, thought of a possibility, Is this the hint from the Church of Knowledge?

No, this isn't just a hint. They're directly escorting me to the destination!

The City of Exiles, as the name suggests, is a place for exiling criminals.

When I'm arrested as a wanted criminal and sentenced to exile, I'll naturally be sent to Morora...

Isn't this method a bit too straightforward?

How did they know I was coming? Although I didn't disguise myself, I kept a low profile the entire way...

Are High-Sequence Beyonders of the Reader pathway adept at prophecy or divination?

Lumian glanced at his waist, looking at the Traveler's Bag that hadn't been confiscated. He couldn't help but silently grumble, They didn't confiscate a wanted criminal's belongings or take measures against potential dangerous criminals to restrict the use of Beyonder powers...

This performance is too unconvincing. Are they afraid I won't notice and might resist, causing losses?

Lumian silently took the Traveler's Bag from his belt and tucked it into the inner pocket of his thick jacket.

He didn't want to make things difficult for the clergy of the Church of Knowledge.

Their poor acting doesn't matter, but I can't be equally patronizing. What if other serious offenders, nearby Azshara citizens, or assisting police officers see the Traveler's Bag?

They'd think the clergy of the Church of Knowledge are unprofessional!

After driving for a while, the vehicle finally stopped.

Under the strict guard of several clergy members in white robes trimmed with brass, Lumian was escorted to a massive white tower.

Before he could take a good look at the tower's full appearance or even see its spire to confirm its grandeur, he was "pushed" through a side door, down a stone staircase, through a dim corridor lit by several gas wall lamps, and into a cell made of black iron.

Lumian glanced around and saw about eight people already inside, all handcuffed and shackled. Some were even chained through their collarbones, fixed in place.

Such restraints would be effective even against Beyonders, but they couldn't suppress those with more mystical abilities... If it were me, being locked up like this would render my Hunter combat skills useless, but it wouldn't stop me from starting fires, provoking, scouting for weaknesses, swapping fates, or teleporting to escape. Come on, can't you be more professional? This performance is too fake... Lumian thought as he watched the elder who had arrested him open the iron cell door.

The slightly aged clergyman stepped aside and said to Lumian, "Stay here and await your judgment."

Judgment? You haven't even done the judgment yet? Have you given up on pretending? Lumian cooperatively shuffled into the cell.

Clang! The iron cell door was closed and locked.

Lumian looked around, found a metal chair fixed to the ground, and sat down, casting his gaze at the serious offenders who were sizing him up.

A young man with glasses, sitting opposite him, raised his chin and said, "Didn't expect someone younger than me to arrive. Brother, what crime did you commit?"

Without answering, Lumian asked in return, "What about you?"

The young man with glasses smiled and said, "Murder. Most people here are murderers."

"How many did you kill?" a middle-aged man with a sturdy build and chains through his collarbones asked curiously.

"Seven or eight. I'm not sure if one of them died in the end," the young man replied with a reminiscent look. "Ending a human life with my own hands, feeling their pain, struggle, and despair, having their warm blood splatter on my face, is intoxicating. At that moment, I felt like their god, their lord."

A Serial Killer? Lumian silently watched, not interrupting the exchange among these serious offenders.

The young man sighed in the end.

"Unfortunately, Azshara has too many detectives. They eventually found me. What about you? How many did you kill, and why?" he asked the middle-aged man with chained collarbones.

The man replied indifferently, as if describing his breakfast, "Don't know. Too many. Do you keep count of how many slices of bread you eat in a month?"

"That's a quote from Emperor Roselle of Intis, right? I read it in a biography," the young man replied with a smile. "I remember eating 123 slices last month."

The middle-aged man was silent for a few seconds and then said, "I kill because they deserve to die. And the more deserving they are, the tastier their flesh."

"You eat the people you kill?" the young man's expression changed slightly.

"Depending on how much they deserve it, there are different cooking methods," the middle-aged man replied seriously.

"You two are both freaks," a sullen man in his thirties snorted.

The young man didn't get angry and asked curiously, "Why did you kill?"

"I didn't kill for the sake of killing. I just wanted to rape them. Blame them on resisting too much," the sullen man answered with a look of disdain, as if saying he was different from these perverts.

The young man laughed and pointed to a woman with disheveled brown hair and collarbone chains, "She also rapes and kills, but that's incidental.

Her main purpose is collecting reproductive organs."

Sitting quietly on a metal chair, slightly leaning forward, Lumian couldn't help but shake his head.

Does Lenburg have too many murderers? On average, each has a few body counts...

The gentlemanly young man looked at Lumian again.

"What about you? What major crime did you commit?"

Lumian thought seriously for a moment and said, "Murder, blasphemy, arson, kidnapping, extortion, intimidation, deceit, causing explosions, inducing miscarriages, worshiping evil gods, attacking government officials, blackmailing the orthodox Churches..."

The young man was stunned for a few seconds and then laughed.

"Brother, haven't you committed too many crimes?"

"Why else would I be here?" Lumian replied casually.

"True." The young man and the other serious offenders looked at Lumian with more respect.

"How many did you kill exactly?" the young man asked, as if he could immerse himself in the details.

Lumian shook his head and said in a low voice, "I didn't count and don't want to answer. It's not something to boast about. It's like a farmer culling wheat-I'm just doing my job. Would you be happy doing your daily job well?"

The young man was silent for a moment and then said, "What's your name? I'm Guei. Maybe we'll meet again in the land of Death."

Lumian simply replied, "Louis."

He didn't want to use his real name among these people or in the City of Exiles. In mysticism, knowing someone's real name could lead to curses.

The Inevitability pathway had similar contract abilities.

"What about you guys?" Guei asked the others.

"Lez," the middle-aged man replied.

The sullen man hesitated but answered, "Vijepan."

"Julie," said the woman with disheveled brown hair, her gaze lingering greedily on Guei and the others' crotches.

After the serious offenders introduced themselves, Lumian smiled and said, "I didn't expect Lenburg's security to be so bad, with so many serial killers. Right, I'm from Intis. I haven't been in Lenburg long."

Guei, the most talkative, raised his handcuffed hands, adjusted his glasses, and said with a smile, "Actually, it's not bad, even quite good, because Lenburg has the

most and best detectives in the world.

"But there are still many people like us-twisted personalities combined with a lot of knowledge easily create a batch of formidable criminals.

"And criminals from other countries come here, wanting to challenge Lenburg's detectives."

Detectives are Sequence 7 of the Reader pathway, which belongs to the Church of Knowledge. There are indeed many here... Could there be real Criminals and Serial Killers among these criminals, using the Detectives for their own role-play? But then again, if the detectives catch the Devil pathway criminals, they can better and faster digest their own potions...

Lumian thought, nodding slightly and replying with a smile, "Am I one of them?

"You have a clear understanding of your own personality. The more knowledge you have, the more dangerous you become."

Guei coughed and said, "Yes, I now regret not having more knowledge."

As the serious offenders alternated between silence and idle chatter, time seemed to pass without notice.

Finally, the clergy from before escorted a woman to the cell.

She wore a shirt with white lace flowers at the collar, a beige coat with brass trim, a dark knee-length skirt, and brown boots. Her face was oval, her light blue eyes like spring water, her nose high and straight, and her brown hair simply tied back with a bun-a very beautiful woman.

Seeing her, Vijepan's eyes lit up.

"You have been judged, and I will announce the verdict." The beautiful woman said before turning and walking toward the end of the dim corridor. The other clergy opened the cell and escorted Lumian, Guei, and the others behind her.

They descended stone stairs, going deeper and deeper underground, until they reached a large, double brass door.

The beautiful woman with the oval face stopped and turned to face Lumian and the others, her expression serious.

"Your verdict is:

"Exile, never to return!"

"Exile to where?" Guei asked, both surprised and confused.

Not a death sentence?

The woman pointed to the brass double doors behind her.

"Exile beyond these doors."

As soon as she finished speaking, a chilling, indistinct sound came from behind the doors.

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Chapter 793 Morora

793 Morora

Hearing the sounds from behind the door, the faces of all the serious offenders changed, except for Lumian.

Guei blurted out, "What's behind the door?"

Could exile actually mean being sent to some monster to be its food?

"Behind the door is a path leading to your place of exile," the beautiful woman with the oval face answered simply. "There are no monsters waiting to eat you, but it is indeed dangerous. I don't know the specifics, but there's definitely a chance for you to survive. It's much better than being hanged or shot."

Guei, Lez, and the others exchanged glances, then looked at the clergy in white robes trimmed with brass. They were tempted but eventually suppressed their urge.

They believed they were no match for the clergy of the Church of Knowledge, especially the beautiful woman who clearly held a higher status.

Guei glanced at Lumian and saw that the wanted criminal, who claimed to have committed various serious crimes, looked calm and unafraid.

"I will open the door in a moment. You will enter on your own. Anyone who stays behind will have an additional charge tagged on, and be sentenced to death on the spot," the beautiful woman said, raising her hands. In her light blue eyes, countless illusory lights seemed to float.

Dark, dim rain fell silently from a height of about four meters, drenching Lumian and the others.

Lumian immediately felt irritated, a wave of violent emotions surging within him.

It seemed like the blood of Omebella was stirring.

"What did you do to us?" Guei asked, unsure and alarmed.

The beautiful woman in the beige coat with brass trim explained in a teaching tone,

"This is a mystic technique called 'Harps' Rain of Sterility.' It renders you infertile but can be reversed with the corresponding mystic technique or by a professional

doctor.

"We don't want babies born in the place of exile. They are innocent."

Rain of Sterility... No wonder Omebella's blood reacted so strongly... I wonder if this secret technique will affect me or if the special properties of Omebella's bloodline will neutralize it... If it works, would it prevent embryos from implanting if I were influenced by the Great Mother in the future? It probably depends on the rank of the influence... Lumian thought that the Rain of Sterility might not be a bad thing.

The other serious offenders didn't see it as a problem either. Some already had children, while others were too cold-blooded or twisted to think much about offspring.

The beautiful woman stepped back a few paces, faced the brass doors, and pressed her hands in the air.

The doors emitted a heavy, metallic creaking sound and slowly opened.

For some reason, Guei and the others felt an urge to go through the doors, stepping into the dim passage beyond.

They didn't notice that, except for the beautiful woman, the clergy of the Church of Knowledge had retreated to the edge of the corridor, standing on the steps when the doors opened.

Lumian felt the same urge, sensing something familiar yet unknown calling to him from deep within the passage.

He walked in the middle of the group, hearing the clang of the closing doors behind them.

The passage dimmed significantly, illuminated only by glowing gems embedded in the walls.

How extravagant... Lumian instinctively thought.

Guei glanced around and whispered, "Should we stay here and wait until there are fewer guards outside, then find a way to escape?"

"Do you think the exiled people before us didn't think of that?" Vijepan sneered. "And we're still shackled. How do we escape?"

Lumian watched coldly, noticing that Guei could somewhat resist the urge to flee while the other serious offenders were finding excuses to reject his suggestion.

After they argued for two or three minutes, Lumian casually asked, "Do we have any food? What if the guards only have a lapse every few days?"

Without waiting for Guei to answer, Lumian continued, "Actually, there is food. Each one of you is food."

He turned to Lez, the human chef, and asked with a smile, "How would you prepare us?"

"Suitable for stewing and pickling. You need the right spices to prevent the taste from turning sour," Lez replied, his face lighting up.

Guei fell silent for a few seconds, then, handcuffed and shackled, began to walk slowly down the passage. Lumian followed at the same pace.

They walked for what felt like seven or eight hours, though Lumian suspected his sense of time was distorted.

During this time, no one chose to stop. It seemed like they were heading not for a City of Exiles but a Land of Hope.

They frequently heard the indescribable terrifying sounds, prompting the human chef, Lez, to comment, "It's like we're walking down a monster's long esophagus, heading for its stomach. The sounds are its digestive movements."

Lumian agreed, while the others felt their hair stand on end.

Finally, they saw stone steps leading upwards.

This seemed to signify that the end was near.

Climbing the steps and pushing open a heavy wooden door, Lumian and the others were momentarily blinded by the bright sunlight, causing them to instinctively close their eyes. The indescribable, chilling sounds ceased.

Almost simultaneously, a gentle voice said, "Welcome to the City of Exiles, Morora."

Just as I thought... Lumian sighed silently, opened his eyes, and looked around.

They were in a grand prayer hall of a cathedral. Sunlight streamed through stained glass windows, creating a sacred and radiant scene.

The walls without windows were adorned with murals depicting mythical stories, while below stood brass bookshelves filled with various books and scrolls.

It felt more like a library than a church.

The speaker was an old man in a white robe trimmed with brass. He was in his sixties or seventies, with graying hair, gentle and clear amber eyes, and no trace of cloudiness. He held a thick book in his left hand, a standard scholar-clergyman of the Church of Knowledge.

Yet Lumian felt he wasn't a real person, suspecting he was a specially crafted puppet.

"Morora? This place is called Morora?" Guei asked curiously, opening his eyes.

The old man nodded. "I am Heraberg, responsible for all theological affairs in Morora."

As he spoke, he extended his right hand, pointing at Lumian and the others.

The shackles, handcuffs, and chains through their collarbones softened instantly, as if made of mud.

With a clatter, they fell from the bodies of the serious offenders, hitting the gray and white stone floor with metallic thuds.

The serious offenders' hearts sank, abandoning any bad thoughts.

Heraberg handed out the thick book and a brass-cased pen.

"Register your names. This signifies your official status as residents of Morora."

Lumian complied, taking the book and writing "Louis."

Next was Guei. He took the book and pen and tentatively asked Heraberg, "How do you know we're writing our real names?"

Heraberg replied calmly, "The past is not important. In Morora, the present and the future matter."

Guei pondered for a while, unsure of the clergyman, Heraberg's meaning.

Considering that the Church of Knowledge could exchange information via telegram, he didn't use a fake name but wrote his real name honestly.

After all the serious offenders finished registering, Heraberg looked at them and said, "You must follow the rules here. Most laws are the same as in other cities in Lenburg, but dueling is legal if both parties agree. Non-violent protests are also allowed. We have a dedicated team to maintain order in Morora."

The honest-looking, middle-aged Lez asked, "Can we join the enforcement team?"

"The enforcement team is made up entirely of experimental personnel," Heraberg replied warmly.

Guei asked, "How do we become experimental personnel?"

Vijepan asked grimly, "What happens if we break the law here? Jail time or death penalty?"

Heraberg smiled.

"The worst punishment for breaking the law here is becoming an experimental personnel."

"Wouldn't that make us enforcers?" Guei was stunned.

Isn't that encouraging us to break the law?

Lumian recalled the term "experimental personnel" frequently appearing in the 0-01 sealed information.

Just from that, he knew becoming experimental personnel was definitely not a good thing.

Heraberg's expression remained unchanged.

"Yes, but remember, besides the church's overseers, at least two experimental personnel are discarded daily."

Discarded... Guei and the others found this term strangely terrifying.

"How many people are in Morora now?" Lumian asked a peculiar question.

Heraberg replied with a smile, "Nearly 200,000. The city has farms, mines, and factories around it, all part of Morora."

"Nearly 200,000? Does Lenburg have that many serious offenders?"

Lumian was slightly surprised.

Heraberg professionally explained, "It's accumulated over generations, and we also spend money to import serious offenders from abroad."

Import... makes it sound like importing talent... Lumian pondered for a few seconds, not in a hurry to "commit a crime," planning to apply to become experimental personnel, hoping to get close to the sealed 0-01.

He bade farewell to Heraberg and headed for the exit of the library-like cathedral, intending to first find the two parts of the Abscessed Hand.

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Chapter 794 The Price of Meddling

794 The Price of Meddling

Behind Lumian, Vijepan continued questioning Heraberg, the clergy of the Church of Knowledge, "In a legal duel, can I do anything to the other party without facing punishment?"

"Yes," Heraberg confirmed.

Vijepan's eyes lit up, feeling as if he had found paradise.

He excitedly swallowed.

Gulp... He heard a similar sound next to him.

He turned his head and saw that the sound came from a woman with long brown hair, Julie.

The "collector" was also excited, while the human chef, Lez, licked his lips.

He was already hungry.

Lumian didn't bother watching the other offenders' performances. He left the library-like cathedral and surveyed the surroundings.

The buildings in this area were ancient, reminiscent of early Fifth Epoch styles with their heavy columns and arches, giving a sense of grandeur and simplicity.

Behind the cathedral was a seemingly endless graveyard. Tombstones stood amidst the trees, with many raised graves dotting the landscape.

This reminded Lumian of a line from the 0-01 sealed information: "Place it in an underground mausoleum with a large number of soldier mannequins. Construct a cemetery with more than a million corpses above it..."

Is the underground mausoleum sealing 0-01 right below? Just as Lumian withdrew his gaze, the previously sunny sky darkened. Thick clouds gathered, and the sound of thunder rumbled.

The weather changes so quickly... No wonder the information mentioned Morora frequently experiencing extreme weather... Lumian sighed as he looked into the distance, seeing mountain ranges resembling giant beasts lying at the horizon, blocking anyone who might want to leave secretly.

Of course, this was just a metaphor, as the residents of Morora never thought of leaving the city.

Lumian felt a slight reluctance too.

The underground was calling to him.

"We need to find a place to settle down quickly, or we'll get soaked," Guei's voice came from beside Lumian.

He had also left the cathedral, and as a local of Azshara, his words were quite formal.

"Yeah," Lumian replied with a smile as he walked into the large square in front of the cathedral.

Guei followed, glancing back and saying in surprise, "There's such a large graveyard here?"

"A graveyard with over a million, even tens of millions of corpses," Lumian replied casually.

Guei nodded thoughtfully.

"History books record a large-scale grave relocation in the early Fifth Epoch in the Lenburg region to address the aftermath of the Pale Disaster. Was it moved here?"

"Perhaps," Lumian said as they crossed the square. He quietly activated the black mark representing the Abscessed Hand, but did not actually use it.

He was sensing the approximate location of the other two parts of the Abscessed Hand.

To his surprise, he sensed more than two parts. Different directions within the City of Exiles had subtle responses.

Hand Bro's body parts got dismembered? Lumian silently muttered.

He chose the direction with the strongest response.

After walking about a street's length, he heard the clashing of metal and saw two men fiercely fighting with sharp swords as a crowd watched.

Duels with fatalities happen daily... Lumian reviewed the 0-01 sealed information. He didn't hurry, deciding to watch for a while.

Guei did the same, seemingly assessing the strength of Morora's residents.

The fight lasted two or three minutes, ending with a man in a black jacket being slashed across the chest and stomach, his intestines spilling out as he convulsed

and died.

A team of men and women in black robes, their expressions indifferent, appeared, silently dragging the stripped corpse away and cleaning the blood from the street, like machines following a set procedure.

The onlookers dispersed. A small man in a brown-green cap, smiling kindly, walked past Lumian and Guei, glancing at them.

"New here?" the small man asked warmly.

"How can you tell?" Guei asked curiously.

The small man laughed.

"You still have that new look, not yet fully integrated into Morora!"

His voice suddenly turned sharp, as if possessed by something unknown.

Lumian watched the small man in silence, observing his changes.

The small man waved.

"Haha, I'm Worms. Let's have a drink sometime."

As Worms walked down another street, Guei suddenly spoke to Lumian, "Don't you feel like you're missing something?"

"I noticed," Lumian replied nonchalantly. "He's quick."

He had only noticed his Traveler's Bag was about to be taken when Worms withdrew his hand.

He must be a real Beyonder, a true Marauder. That sudden state change was likely a performance to distract attention.

"Why didn't you expose him if you noticed? Afraid of retaliation?" Guei didn't understand Lumian's reaction.

"I wanted to see what he would do," Lumian replied with a smile, hands in his pockets, slowly following the route Worms had taken.

Guei watched his back for a while, then decided to find a place to stay first.

...

Once out of Lumian and Guei's sight, Worms quickened his pace, darting through several alleys in a circuitous route.

After confirming he had shaken off any potential pursuers, he stopped in a secluded alley and took out a dark black coin pouch from inside his clothes.

It was Lumian's Traveler's Bag.

"Haha, these new fools are so careless. Let's see what's inside..." Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag.

His expression changed slightly, filled with intense surprise.

He could "see" the pouch's value, sensing many items with spirituality inside, but he hadn't expected it to be a rare spatial item, holding what felt like a small room.

What a pleasant surprise... Worms pulled out one of the items.

What greeted his eyes was a half-decomposed, dark blue swollen corpse, dripping yellowish-red pus.

Smack!

Worms recoiled, letting the half-corpse fall to the ground.

Wh- His face turned horrified.

Who carries a half-decomposed corpse around?

And a highly decayed corpse at that!

Even in Morora, filled with countless murderers, this is the most twisted thing!

No wonder he was exiled here!

Steadying himself, Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag again, pulling out a piece of smooth, white leather.

He couldn't take his eyes off it, as if staring at the skin of a dream lover.

He quickly noticed some black words on the leather that he didn't recognize.

Seems to be words that can trigger Beyonder powers. This leather must be very valuable. I should copy it and find someone to decipher it without arousing suspicion, Worms thought in delight, caressing the leather, unwilling to let go.

Suddenly, he felt his throat itch.

Cough, cough, cough!

He started coughing, more and more violently.

Within seconds, he coughed so hard it felt like his heart would tear apart.

Pfft!

Worms spat out a mouthful of blood.

This isn't right! How did I suddenly get so sick? Worms, vaguely understanding, threw the leather to the ground.

But his coughing continued, even more violently.

While coughing, he thought of a way to save himself: That guy put such dangerous leather in his pocket, he must have prepared a cure...

Yes, there must be one!

Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag again.

He first pulled out a gray-white lightning-shaped brooch.

A thick, silvery-white lightning bolt suddenly descended from the stacked clouds, striking him.

Boom!

The thunder echoed, and Worms fell, his body charred and twitching.

Already gravely ill, the lightning strike left him near death.

How... how could I suddenly be struck... by lightning... I, I... Worms's vision darkened, his confusion and regret lingering as he closed his eyes.

He soon stopped breathing.

About ten seconds later, Lumian turned into the alley, walked to Worms, looked down at his body, and shook his head with a smile.

"Rummaging through others' belongings is very dangerous."

After a pause, Lumian regrettably sighed.

"I wanted to follow you and get in touch with Morora's Beyonders. You let me down.

"And you didn't even get to the more dangerous items."

As he spoke, Lumian picked up the Traveler's Bag, placing the items back inside in their compressed form: the Fury of the Sea brooch, the Demoness of Despair human leather, and the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand.

"I guess being a generous soul is all you can do," Lumian muttered, extracting 537 sassen gold from Worms.

That was about 2863 verl d'or.

Pocketing the generous soul's gift, Lumian waited for Worms's Beyonder characteristics to manifest.

About two minutes later, a team of black-robed enforcers entered the alley. The leader looked at Lumian expressionlessly and said, "Did you kill him?"

"No, he was struck by lightning. Maybe he did too many bad things," Lumian replied with a smile, explaining earnestly. "He was a thief and stole my stuff, so I chased him here."

The enforcers stared at Lumian as if verifying his truthfulness.

After a moment, the leader nodded. "You may leave."

Lumian didn't move, smiling as he said, "His belongings should be mine, right?"

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Chapter 795 "Old Friend"

795 "Old Friend"

The leader of the enforcers was around forty, clean-shaven, with dark brown eyes.

He responded to Lumian's question without any expression, "There's no such rule."

He meant there was no rule stating that all items on a thief's body should go to the victim.

Lumian smiled and asked, "But there's also no law specifically prohibiting it, right?"

"Right." The leader of the enforcers nodded slowly.

Lumian's smile broadened. "Coming to Morora means cutting all ties with the past, right?"

This was inferred from what the clergyman Heraberg had said in the cathedral.

"Yes." The enforcer did not deny it.

Lumian probed further, "And this thief doesn't have any other heirs in Morora, does he?"

Before being sent to Morora, serious criminals were sterilized. Unless they were part of a criminal family or found a partner with similar criminal interests here, no one in Morora had legal heirs.

The enforcer didn't answer Lumian immediately. He pulled a thick book from under his black robe and started searching for the relevant records.

"Do you know this thief's name?" Lumian asked thoughtfully.

The enforcer nodded. "His name is Worms."

Soon, the records were found. The enforcer read in a flat voice, "His parents and siblings are not in Morora, and he hasn't married here, at least not officially registered."

"So, according to the laws from where I come from, a thief's possessions go to the person who caught them if there are no other heirs or claimants," Lumian began to explain, "Just like in a legal duel, the victor can take the spoils."

The enforcer stared at Lumian for a few seconds before saying, "Okay."

He and his team stood patiently as Worms's Beyonder characteristics manifested, merging with one of his fingers, which then broke off, turning semi-transparent black.

Lumian put away the Beyonder characteristics but didn't leave immediately. Instead, he stayed, watching as the enforcers dragged away the body and cleaned the blood and scorch marks from the alley.

The clouds above thickened, and lightning and thunder grew more frequent.

Finally, the alley was clean and quiet, with only Lumian remaining.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully, murmuring to himself, The enforcers seem to remember the appearance and names of every Morora resident...

After becoming enforcers, they are still human but not quite human anymore...

He felt that the so-called enforcers, who were actually experimental personnel, acted like puppets following set procedures, lacking self-awareness and deep thinking.

He had deliberately asked if Worms's belongings were his, not out of greed for the Beyonder characteristics, although that played a small part, as Beyonder characteristics were valuable. He had long figured that Worms wasn't a Sequence 7 Marauder, as a Sequence 7 called Cryptologist would have deciphered some of the secrets of the items in the Traveler's Bag and understood their dangers, not dying just after examining three items.

Lumian even doubted Worms had reached Sequence 8 Swindler, because the thief didn't seem smart enough.

Lumian's questions to the enforcers were not to showcase his talent in being a negotiator or exploit loopholes but to test the enforcers' state.

And he had his answer.

He felt that after becoming enforcers, these serious criminals became like the wax figures in the Sauron family's Red Swan Castle or a combination of the Iron and Blood Cross Order Supervisor Olson, but without the violent madness, instead exhibiting a gentle indifference.

Is this the combined effect of the 0-01 corruption and Morora's sealing influence? Lumian was unsure if he would retain his self-awareness if he joined the enforcers, or end up just following Morora's rules, becoming a puppet of the City of Exiles or 0-01.

This made him waver in his original plan to approach 0-01 as an enforcer.

He laughed softly, asking in a low voice, "Termiboros, do you want to be Morora's puppet?"

Termiboros ignored him.

Whoosh!

The downpour finally arrived, shrouding Morora in a mist of rain and a doomsday-like gloom.

Lumian followed the shelter of the huge buildings, avoiding the rain as he headed to the place where the strongest feedback from the Abscessed Hand's missing parts came from.

When he reached his destination, his clothes were half-soaked by the wind and rain, and the water on the street was nearly up to the steps.

Lumian glanced to the side, seeing a sign by the door depicting a knife, fork, and wine glass, with the words in Lenburg: "Carnivore"

A bar serving food? Carnivore... Lumian pondered the bar's name, suddenly having a strange guess, The feedback indicated that parts of Hand Bro's body are scattered across Morora, but originally there were only two pieces...

The demon with the goat face in the Underworld cut and ate Hand Bro's rotten flesh daily, and it regenerated...

This bar is called "Carnivore"...

Could it be that one piece of Hand Bro's body was obtained by the bar's owner, saving them the cost of buying meat and using it as a substitute?

Other bar owners in different cities might not do this, but in Morora, they likely would, since they were exiled here for serious crimes. The bar owner might even be a perverted butcher who killed people and sold their meat...

If that's true, things will be troublesome. Who knows how many people have eaten and integrated Hand Bro's rotten flesh, and what impact that might have...

Can I merge the remaining parts once I find the original two pieces?

Lumian muttered silently for a while, then ran through the rain and pushed open the heavy wooden door of the Carnivore bar.

Upon arriving in Morora, after almost reassembling the Abscessed Hand's body, he had started referring to it as Hand Bro, half-jokingly and half to show "closeness," hoping it wouldn't attack him when fully restored, as there might be other dangers then.

Just as he entered the bar, bringing in the rain, Lumian saw a familiar figure.

That figure sat on a high stool in front of the bar, their hair tinged with red, eyebrows and eyes leaning towards brown, looking handsome yet unlikable due to their overly sharp features.

Albus!

Albus Medici!

Lumian tensed, though his expression remained calm as he smiled and walked towards the bar.

He used to think Albus Medici was mysterious and possibly involved in some conspiracy. Later, he learned about the existence of the Red Angel Medici, realizing this former King of Angels had orchestrated a massive plot and successfully obtained the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic of the Hunter pathway from Vermonda Sauron in Fourth Epoch Trier.

This made Lumian associate Albus Medici with the Red Angel, suspecting Albus was the King of Angels' agent, sent to Morora to find a way to get close to 0-01.

For Lumian, this was bad news, as Medici was close to ascending to the Red Priest's divine throne!

Albus Medici noticed Lumian's gaze and turned, looking back at Lumian, who had made no effort to disguise himself beyond restoring his hair color.

"What brings you here?" Lumian smiled as if meeting an old friend.

Albus returned the smile. "What brings you here?"

"Of course, I was captured," Lumian laughed, sitting beside Albus and tapping the bar counter, "Give me a steak, tenderloin, medium-rare," he told the bartender, who looked as if he had lost his parents.

"Are you mimicking me? Also being randomly captured and ordering a tenderloin steak," Albus said, one foot on the stool's footrest, the other resting on his knee.

Before Lumian could respond, he relaxed and asked with a smile, "What crime did you commit?"

"Murder, blasphemy, arson, causing explosions, kidnapping..." Lumian repeated the crimes he had told Guei and others before, but not in the same order.

He was relaxed as he asked, "What about you?"

"Me?" Albus jiggled his foot resting on his knee, "Murder, arson, inciting riots, attempting to overthrow the government."

"Which government?" Lumian asked in a tone of old friends reuniting.

"Intis." Albus shrugged, "Don't ask me why I tried to overthrow the Intis government and ended up in this strange city in Lenburg. I don't know either."

That's such a patronizing answer... Lumian nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I didn't commit crimes in Lenburg either."

As the two former Iron and Blood Cross Order members "chatted," two steaks were served.

Looking at the steaks on white porcelain plates, slightly bloody and with a good-looking texture, Lumian remained silent and didn't pick up his knife and fork.

He sensed a connection.

This was indeed the Abscessed Hand's rotten flesh, cut from the body!

After a few seconds, Lumian glanced to the side and found Albus Medici also staring at the "steak" without moving.

Lumian smiled and asked, "Why aren't you eating?"

Albus responded with a radiant smile. "Why aren't you?"

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Chapter 796 "Duel"

796 "Duel"

In response to Albus's question, Lumian let out a soft laugh and muttered to himself, This guy seems pretty sharp...

No idea when he was exiled to Morora, but this must be his first time eating here...

Did he come here because he noticed some people in Morora behaving strangely after eating at this bar?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian slapped the bar counter.

He jumped off the stool and coldly said to the bartender, whose expression had remained grim.

"Serving this kind of meat as steak to me? Get your boss out here!"

The bartender was taken aback. "Are you certain?"

He wasn't embarrassed or angry at Lumian's attitude; instead, there seemed to be a slight hint of pleasant surprise.

Lumian didn't answer but conveyed with his eyes that he wanted the boss to hurry up and come out.

The bartender immediately shouted, "Boss! Boss! Someone's about to wreck your bar!"

Within seconds, a figure rushed out from the kitchen.

The figure had messy, fluffy hair and a very fat face, layered with flesh that made his eyes appear small, yet his body was quite standard, showing no sign of obesity.

At this moment, he was wearing a white apron and holding a cleaver, glaring angrily at the two customers near the bar, shouting in Lenburg, "Who? Who's going to wreck my bar?"

Lumian pointed at the steak on the white porcelain plate and sneered, "You think I can't tell what kind of meat this is?"

"If I say it's steak, it's steak," the fat-faced boss retorted without backing down.

Lumian didn't argue further. He took out a black glove from the Traveler's Bag and tossed it in front of him.

"I challenge you to a duel," Lumian said calmly.

Throwing down a glove was a customary way to issue a duel challenge in Intis.

The boss glanced at the black glove on the ground, his layers of fat shifting to reveal a light yellow beard.

He was laughing.

He responded to Lumian's challenge, "Okay."

As soon as he spoke, he raised the cleaver and swung it down at Lumian.

Lumian sidestepped the blow, but suddenly felt he couldn't use his teleportation ability.

The contract ability from the Abscessed Hand seemed to be stripped away by some strange power!

Lumian recalled Ludwig's description of the Sequence 5 Depriver of the Gourmet pathway and suspected this boss-cum-chef was a blessed one of this pathway.

No wonder he can make Hand Bro's rotten flesh look and smell like real steak...

A bestowed not executed but exiled to Morora?

Stop dumping all the trash in Morora...

Is it because they fear Morora's population decline, risking the seal on 0-01?

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Lumian swung his shoulder, his arm swelling, and punched out with his right fist.

His fist burst into bright, blazing-white flames, like a peacock's tail, heading straight for the bartender.

Boom!

As his fist struck the side of the heavy cleaver, a violent explosion occurred.

The blazing-white light lit up the entire bar, the violent blast overturning nearby stools and throwing the fat-faced boss away.

Albus reacted quickly, jumping off his stool and perching on the bar counter far from the blast area.

He pulled one foot up, resting it on the bar, watching Lumian's duel with interest.

The bartender was also caught in the blast, thrown against the liquor shelf, doused in the fragrant liquid from shattered bottles.

He was nearly set on fire.

The bar owner, who took the brunt of the explosion, had his chest clothes torn, revealing blood, charred flesh, and white bones.

His face had similar wounds, but the layers of fat kept it from affecting his skull.

The wounds were writhing and healing rapidly in an unnatural, inhuman way, as if they would soon be completely healed.

This isn't a power or trait typical of a Depriver. None of the middle or low Sequences in the Gourmet pathway have this ability. Did he gain this from a special kind of food as a Chef? It's similar to how Hand Bro's rotten flesh can regenerate after being eaten... Lumian retreated a few steps from the bar owner, putting distance between them.

As he noticed the other party's peculiarity, he also realized he had lost another ability-Spell of Harrumph.

Can a Depriver sense which of my abilities and traits are most dangerous to them? Even if they don't know exactly what those abilities and traits are, can they still deprive me of them based on the level of danger they pose? Lumian calmly formed a massive, blazing-white fireball and shot it at the bar owner.

The bar owner didn't dodge. He raised his nearly shattered cleaver and slashed at the blazing-white fireball.

The fireball split in two, losing its momentum and destructive aura. The bar owner opened his mouth wide and sucked it in like a whale swallowing water, remaining unharmed.

At that moment, Lumian laughed.

More blazing-white fireballs rapidly formed around him, whistling through the air toward the bar owner.

Behind him, blazing-white fire crows appeared one after another, flying in wide arcs to flank the bar owner.

Lumian wanted to see how many fireballs the Depriver could handle and if he could eat them all without getting overwhelmed.

The bar owner's eyes narrowed, and he immediately spewed the blazing-white flames from his stomach, transforming them into a torrent to meet the incoming fireballs.

Seeing this, Albus flipped over the bar counter.

Rumble!

The fireballs exploded one after another upon contact with the flames.

The counter was flattened, the liquor shelves collapsed silently, and the mixed liquor burned in a fierce blaze.

The bartender, who had escaped to Albus's position, felt very fortunate he had reacted in time.

Other patrons either shrank to the edges of the room or escaped the hall, showing a wealth of experience.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The blazing-white Fire Ravens, which had deliberately avoided the front, fell on the bar owner's back one after another.

By then, the bar owner was covered in a semi-transparent crimson glow, like solidified moonlight.

Rumble!

Despite the explosions and flames from the Fire Ravens, the bar owner's crimson glow didn't dim. Instead, it brightened with the fire's reflection.

When the flames finally subsided, the bar owner returned to his normal appearance. He lifted his cleaver and looked at where Lumian had been standing.

No one was there.

Lumian was nowhere to be seen in the hall either.

The bar owner was momentarily stunned.

Almost simultaneously, a figure emerged from his shadow.

Lumian, his eyes iron-black, struck the bar owner's crotch with his blazing-white flame-covered right fist.

Amid the rumbling, Lumian's fist hit its mark, penetrating the Depriver's intestines with blazing-white flames.

Standing up straight, Lumian lifted the bar owner, letting the flames surge into his stomach.

Then, Lumian withdrew his right fist and threw the bar owner to the ground.

With a thud, the bar owner's crotch split open, intestines spilling out, and his stomach, though intact, was scorched and oozing yellow-green fluid.

Lumian looked at the bar owner's pained, shrunken eyes and mocked, "Did you turn your brain into food too? You blocked one round of attacks, then stayed in the same spot without moving. Did you not consider that I might use your shadow?"

The bar owner's face twisted as he murmured, "Turning... my own... brain into... food... Is it possible?"

His voice faded, and he died, lying motionless on the ground.

Lumian stared at the Depriver's corpse, not thinking about his opponent's response, but noting something unusual about the battle.

Deprivers sure have a variety of abilities. Though each one is basic and crude, their combat applications are quite formidable...

If this guy hadn't reacted so sluggishly after I vanished, I wouldn't have attacked his weak spot so easily. I might have needed to use one of the mystical items from the Traveler's Bag...

In comparison, Worms the Marauder didn't have this problem...

As he thought, Lumian shook his hand, revealing painful corrosive wounds caused by the stomach acid of the bar owner when he delivered the strike at his stomach.

His hand had been protected by the blazing-white flames at the time.

Despite knowing he couldn't prevent the bar owner's boons from returning to their source, Lumian squatted down, pulled a plain sword from the Traveler's Bag, and used his flames to separate the stomach from the corpse.

He planned to ask Ludwig if this could be made into a dish with special effects or if it could be used as a unique material by an Artisan.

Finished with this task, Lumian stood and asked the bartender, who had just emerged from hiding and was severely injured, "How many years has your boss been exiled in Morora?"

"Five or six years, I think," the bartender answered with an uncertain look.

Five or six years... That thief looked younger, probably only exiled for a year or two... The longer one stays in Morora, the more likely they are to show symptoms of experimental personnel-symptoms of 0-01 corruption. No, the sealing information didn't mention this, and it doesn't happen in Trier... Did the bar owner do something in Morora that caused him to start turning into an experimental subject? Lumian pondered as he looked around and smiled. "Don't take my spoils."

He referred to the bar owner's money.

Lumian then walked towards the corridor beside the bar.

Based on the origin of the "steak" and the Chef's position, he suspected the Abscessed Hand's body part was in the kitchen.

Entering the kitchen, he saw a half-decayed, swollen, blue-black corpse openly displayed on the cooking counter.

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Chapter 797 Determining the Situation

797 Determining the Situation

Looking at the swollen, blue-black corpse on the counter, Lumian chuckled to himself, They're not even trying to hide it, are they? Classic Morora, the City of Exiles...

Lumian did a quick inspection, confirming that the highly decayed corpse was indeed the other body part of the Abscessed Hand. Besides missing the left half, the corresponding part of the head, and the Abscessed Hand's body itself, it was fairly intact.

If it weren't for the rotting flesh at the spine writhing and trying to regenerate, Lumian might have doubted that the two steaks served to him and Albus had come from this corpse, let alone that dozens, perhaps hundreds, of such "steaks" had been sold.

This made Lumian frown slightly, a question he had pondered earlier resurfacing in his mind: Must I do a recall of all the steaks sold?

Judging by the corpse's completeness, it doesn't seem necessary...

Moreover, the residents of Morora had been eating such steaks for some time. Who knows if they've actually digested and absorbed the rotten flesh...

From what I sense about the subtle connections between the corpse, even if digested, the rotten flesh likely just changes form without fundamentally altering...

As he pondered, Lumian quickly stuffed the half-decayed corpse into the Traveler's Bag, using the Sword of Courage and other plain swords to separate it from the other half to prevent unwanted fusion before finding the head.

"So we were served this stuff, and it looked pretty appetizing," Albus's voice came from the kitchen doorway as Lumian put away the half of the Abscessed Hand.

Albus, the former member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Medici family member, wore a black jacket with dark red patterns, one hand in his pocket, marveling.

He didn't seem disgusted by almost eating rotten flesh steak.

Lumian turned and responded with a smile, "I was looking forward to seeing what changes you'd undergo after eating it."

"Gradually gain some self-healing ability, become stronger on moonlit nights, and learn some dark spells," Albus replied in a report-like tone.

"But in return, self-control would significantly decrease, intelligence would regress, and nightmares would be frequent."

"So, you came to investigate after noticing the odd behavior of those guys?" Lumian asked with a smile.

He wasn't really seeking confirmation; he had already determined it. He was using this question to indicate that he was also investigating and hadn't come specifically for the half-corpse.

"A Hunter must conceal their true purpose to avoid traps set by others." The red-haired Albus smiled. "They tried to keep this a secret, hoping only they and their collaborators could enjoy this bar's special food."

"Who in Morora isn't selfish?" Lumian asked, changing the topic. "How did you notice their intelligence regression?"

Albus raised his right hand, palm up. "If their intelligence hadn't regressed, how could they have revealed their secret to me so easily, leading me to this bar?"

Lumian nodded slightly, looking thoughtful. "So, should I kill you to keep this secret from spreading?"

Albus met Lumian's gaze calmly, smiling. "Do you think those idiots can keep a secret?"

With that, the Medici family member turned and walked towards the bar hall, exposing his back to Lumian.

Lumian stood still, watching him leave, as if deep in thought.

For a moment, he had the urge to kill.

He considered using this chance to eliminate Albus Medici to prevent him from interfering with his approach to 0-01, or even marking it for the Red Angel before him.

Ultimately, Lumian resisted this impulse.

For two reasons: First, he judged that becoming an experimental subject would severely impact his self-awareness. Unless it was his only option, he didn't want to try it. In that case, having an extra person, a "cannon fodder" to help navigate the dangers, was a viable strategy.

Second, he wasn't confident he could kill Albus Medici. If Albus was still in the same state as when they explored the Red Swan Castle, he would be easily dealt with, but several months had passed. He had become a Reaper and had even fully digested the corresponding potion. It was unlikely the other party hadn't made any progress.

Moreover, if Albus was indeed representing the Red Angel in approaching 0-01, the King of Angels would likely enhance His descendant's strength, providing powerful items to ensure he was among the apex below demigods, capable of handling Morora's dangers.

Lumian didn't leave the kitchen immediately. He checked around again.

He was looking for any other special ingredients-the bar owner's slightly sluggish behavior made him suspect it was caused by randomly eating something in Morora, a common cause of death for Beyonders of the Gourmet pathway.

Unfortunately, Lumian only found ordinary ingredients like flour, butter, and milk.

He then went up to the second floor of the Carnivore bar, entering the Depriver's bedroom.

He planned to stay here as the duel winner for the time being.

The bedroom was cleaner than Lumian expected-no grease stains, no cockroaches, mice, or insects. Aside from being slightly messy, it was fine.

Lumian walked around the bedroom, trying to activate the black mark on his right shoulder to see if he could teleport out of Morora.

He couldn't sense any of the places he had been to.

As expected, I can't leave. I can only teleport within this mountainous area... But it's not like Morora residents want to leave... I wonder if Albus has such thoughts... Lumian muttered silently, taking out ritual materials from the Traveler's Bag.

He conducted his second experiment: Summoning a messenger!

But neither the doll messenger nor his own messenger responded to his call.

Disconnected from the spirit world? At least to some extent... As expected from a place sealing 0-01... Lumian stood at the window, gazing at the dim environment and the slightly less intense rain, feeling the cold dampness seeping in.

He proceeded with the third experiment according to his plan.

He walked to the full-length mirror in the room, placed his right hand on it, and activated a black mark on his body.

He was using the contractual ability from Bloody Jack to sense the mirror marks he had left elsewhere!

In the blink of an eye, Lumian sensed three faint marks through the mirror.

They were in Moron Avigny's study, the Blue Avenger's treasury, and Franca and Jenna's rented apartment.

This meant that if Lumian could enter the mirror, he might be able to use his teleportation ability to reach the mirrors corresponding to these marks. Even if not, he should be able to exchange information with the outside world through them!

Lumian was both pleasantly surprised and satisfied that his hypothesis was confirmed.

Having read the 0-01 data, he knew its origin and its connection to Fourth Epoch Trier. Given the similar sealing methods, many details should also be consistent- Trier had a special mirror world, so this place likely did too. Trier had Mirror People, so this place likely had them too!

The experimental subjects' detail, "if not blindfolded, the one who leaves the mausoleum will be a monster resembling him," was evidence of the Mirror People and the special mirror world's existence.

Based on these premises, Lumian thought using the mirror world's abilities might establish some contact with the outside world.

With this hypothesis, he borrowed the Mirror Cufflink from Franca, who had become a Demoness of Affliction. In a few days, she could use the pretext of investigating Mirror People to request charms from the Demoness Sect that would allow her to use the mirror world for teleportation.

Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and took out the glass-like cufflink.

He didn't rush to confirm if it could be used to leave directly or only to transmit information, as the Mirror Cufflink had only four uses left. He'd wait for important information or urgent matters to test it.

Grr, grr... At that moment, Lumian's stomach growled with hunger.

He couldn't help but gripe internally, Seriously, the Church of Knowledge is so stingy. Not even a meal or a sip of water before sending me into Morora. I'm not Ludwig, who can finish all the prison food...

Muttering, Lumian descended to the first floor, intending to cook something in the kitchen and wait for the rain to stop before looking for the Abscessed Hand's head.

By now, the bar owner's body had been taken away by the enforcers, and the bloodstains on the floor had been cleaned, but the destroyed bar counter and the hall's scorched remains hadn't been dealt with. Glass shards and wood splinters

mixed with the scents of liquor and charred wood.

Just as Lumian picked up the bar owner's legacy left by the enforcers- 420 sassen gold-someone walked in from the doorway.

It was the humble-looking human meat chef, Lez.

Lez was soaked, glanced around, and asked Lumian, "Are you hiring a chef here?"

The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence? Lumian suddenly laughed. "Sure, go to the kitchen and make something. I'll try it and see how it tastes."

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Chapter 798 Hire

798 Hire

Lez looked at Lumian with confusion and asked, "Can you make decisions for the owner here?"

"Yes, because I am the owner now," Lumian replied with a smile, pointing to himself.

The human meat chef, Lez, was even more perplexed. "Weren't we just exiled to Morora together?"

It had been less than an hour since they arrived.

Lumian tilted his head and pointed his chin towards the destroyed bar area. "I had a duel with the previous owner and won this bar from him."

Lez's eyes suddenly lit up. "Is he dead? Where's his body?"

"The enforcers took it away, probably to be buried in the cemetery," Lumian said, walking to the edge of the hall and picking up a relatively intact chair, placing it next to the ruined bar.

Lez sighed regretfully but followed Lumian's suggestion and went into the kitchen to start cooking.

Lumian wandered to the bar area, searching for the two "steaks" he and Albus hadn't eaten.

They were torn to pieces in the violent explosion, scattered among the debris, completely charred and carbonized.

After examining them for a while, Lumian noticed that the steak fragments showed no signs of writhing or regeneration. The fire had destroyed any subtle connection to the corpse, making them seem entirely dead and no longer part of the Abscessed Hand.

These probably don't need to be recalled...

High-temperature flames can restrain the self-healing ability of the separated rotten flesh, but it's unclear how much it affects the corpse itself...

Besides, the separated rotten flesh must only have a limited self-healing ability; otherwise, each piece could grow into a new Hand Bro, and there'd be no need for

Hand Bro to find the whole corpse...

After pondering for a while, Lumian brought over a small overturned round table from the edge of the hall and placed it next to the chair.

He sat down, patiently waiting for Lez to prepare lunch.

As time passed, Lez brought out a mixed salad, creamy mashed potatoes, and other dishes.

Lumian took a spoonful of mashed potatoes and tasted it, finding the texture unusually smooth and the flavors of starch, cream, and fat deliciously combined.

"Not bad," Lumian said, raising his left hand and giving a thumbs up.

Lez stood beside him, smiling humbly.

"I used to own a restaurant."

"A restaurant specializing in human meat?" Lumian teased provocatively.

Lez shook his head.

"Back then, I was a normal chef with excellent, but still human, cooking skills."

"Then why did you start eating people?" Lumian didn't directly ask when he started worshiping an evil god.

He didn't know which evil god corresponded to the Gourmet pathway.

Lez's expression gradually darkened.

"My wife had a friend who always filled her head with the idea of a luxurious lifestyle, introducing her to so-called high society members, even encouraging her to have affairs and squander money. She secretly mortgaged our restaurant; her goal was our restaurant from the start.

"After losing the restaurant, that friend stopped associating with my wife. My wife finally came to her senses but was too weak. She burned down the restaurant, killing herself in the process.

"Then a regular customer, who admired my cooking skills, approached me and asked if I wanted revenge. He offered to help, saying someone with my high-level cooking skills should worship the God of Cuisine, the great 'Devouring Whirlpool.'

"After that, I received a boon and slowly grew stronger.

"After becoming a true Chef, I found that woman and made her into the most satisfying meal of my life.

"From that day on, I enjoyed eating the flesh of the damned and gained the ability to discern who deserved to die."

"Was that woman also a follower of an evil god?" Hearing this, Lumian strongly suspected that the first person Lez ate was a bestowed of the Broker pathway.

Perhaps Lez's restaurant was part of a transaction.

"Yes," Lez confirmed, "She worshiped the so-called Truth. When she met my wife, she was still weak."

As expected... Lumian smiled.

The ability to discern who deserves to die is quite useful. When I capture a Broker pathway Sequence 7 or higher, I'll leave it to Ludwig to handle.

After finishing the meal Lez prepared, Lumian nodded in satisfaction.

"I'm willing to hire you as the chef for this bar. Let's discuss your compensation and responsibilities."

"Alright," Lez said, assuming a listening posture.

Lumian picked up a white napkin and wiped his mouth.

"There's quite a bit of wine left in the cellar. Clean up the bar, rebuild it, and display the wine. After that, you'll be responsible for hiring and managing bartenders and waitstaff, as well as reestablishing contact with suppliers."

"That's the job of a manager," Lez noted, having run a restaurant before.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"Yes, chef and manager.

"The bar's revenue, after costs, will all be yours."

"What about you?" Lez had never seen such an owner.

Not even wanting the money?

Lumian stood up, stretching his body, and casually said, "You'll be responsible for my meals, cleaning my room, and if there are special ingredients, making dishes or cocktails that give me the corresponding traits. Also, I don't eat human meat."

Lez stared at Lumian for a few seconds and said in a deep voice, "You seem to know a lot about a Chef's abilities."

Lumian glanced at the now-stopped rain outside and walked towards the bar's entrance, smiling.

"The previous owner of this bar was a Depriver, but unfortunately, I deprived him of his life, so he can't share his culinary skills with you."

Moreover, my godson is an Angel of your pathway.

Lez fell silent. As Lumian was about to leave the bar, he finally spoke, "I'll take good care of this bar."

Lumian didn't look back, raising his right hand and waving lightly in acknowledgment.

There were still some deep pools of water on the street outside, with pedestrians mainly walking on the sidewalks. The sky was now bright and sunny, as if there hadn't been a heavy rainstorm.

Following the subtle connection from the contract mark, Lumian walked towards the suspected location of the Abscessed Hand's head.

Turning a corner, he saw a drenched corpse lying under a book-engraved obelisk. It was Vijepan, the gloomy rapist-murderer who had been exiled to Morora with Lumian and others.

At this moment, his hands and feet were severed at the joints, his pants stripped off, and his groin a bloody mess with the most important part missing.

His eyes were wide open, frozen in pain and despair.

Lost the duel, huh? Lumian murmured with a silent laugh.

He almost whistled in admiration for the duel he hadn't witnessed.

It must have been exciting; whoever died deserved a toast.

Looks like that collector named Julie is stronger... Both she and Vijepan had ulterior motives, no, open intentions to provoke a duel... Lumian thought Julie was likely a Beyonder. Such knife skills weren't something an ordinary person could possess.

As for whether Vijepan was a Beyonder, Lumian couldn't tell for now.

Even if he was, his Beyonder characteristic should have been taken.

"That woman is formidable," a voice suddenly said beside Lumian.

A gentleman had come from the side of the small square.

He wore a half-high silk hat, a white shirt, a cashmere sweater, and a woolen suit jacket, with a bow tie and a cane in hand.

He looked just over thirty, with a thin face and gentle blue eyes, like a well-educated upper-class person.

Of course, in Morora, there were no good people, only bad people and worse people.

"Did you see their fight?" Lumian asked casually.

The gentleman smiled. "They initially wanted to borrow revolvers for a duel from the restaurant over there, but the waiter told them that there were too many duels today and all the guns were borrowed, leaving only two long swords.

"That woman was very skilled. This man blocked three strikes before being knocked down, having his hands and feet cut off, and his pants removed."

So Vijepan wasn't likely a Beyonder... Lumian shifted his gaze from the corpse to the gentleman and asked with a smile, "What's your name?"

The gentleman placed a hand on his chest and bowed.

"You can call me Gusain, or Count. I heard you killed Worms?"

"Worms, the thief?" Lumian laughed. "He was struck by lightning, nothing to do with me. If I had killed him, the enforcers would have arrested me."

Gusain smiled slightly. "There are ways to deceive the enforcers."

So you've noticed their rigidity and procedural nature too? Lumian thought for a few seconds before deciding to be "honest."

"Worms died because he wasn't lucky enough. The item he stole from me attracts lightning during rain."

"Then you can't be blamed," Gusain said understandingly.

He asked warmly, "How should I address you, and where are you staying now?"

"Louis, staying at the Carnivore bar," Lumian replied truthfully.

Gusain nodded slightly.

"Be wary of Bainar, the bar's owner and chef. He's dangerous and cannibalistic."

Lumian smiled. "He's already dead."

Gusain paused for a moment before smiling. "You're more interesting than I expected. I hope you bring long-lost vitality to Morora."

Lumian didn't continue the topic, instead taking the opportunity to gather information.

"In Morora, apart from Heraberg from the Church of Knowledge, who else should I watch out for?"

Without hesitation, Gusain replied, "Wanak, the owner of Dades Agricultural Company, has a monopoly on the grain supply from the surrounding farms to Morora. He had become an experimental subject but suddenly escaped and now behaves like a normal person.

"He is the most dangerous one in Morora."

Can someone really return to normal after becoming an experimental subject? And the Church of Knowledge didn't do anything about Wanak leaving the experimental group? This is exactly what I need... Lumian thought to himself and nodded. "Who is the second most dangerous person in Morora?"

Gusain's smile remained unchanged as he answered, "They say it's me."

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Chapter 799 Provocation

799 Provocation

Lumian wasn't surprised that Gusain indirectly referred to himself as the second most dangerous person in Morora. Instead, he smiled and asked, "What have you done? I mean, what have you done in Morora?"

Gusain's smile faded as he spoke seriously.

"Organized uprisings.

"We're already in the City of Exiles. Why should we still accept the rule of the Church of Knowledge? We should unite and drive them out of Morora. Then, we'll make our own rules and govern ourselves!"

Ignoring other factors, your words do make some sense. But the issue is, if we overthrow the Church's rule, why stay in Morora? Is this the influence of 0-01? The residents of Morora never consider leaving the city... Fortunately, I have a false Angel rank and all sorts of random items, so I'm only somewhat reluctant to leave, not entirely devoid of such thoughts... Lumian first confirmed the abnormalities of Morora from Gusain's response, then understood why people considered Gusain the second most dangerous person in Morora.

Uprisings were something the Church of Knowledge wouldn't allow, and given the information on 0-01, Gusain must have organized multiple uprisings and still hadn't been caught and added to the experimental subjects!

This was enough to show that this gentleman-like mature man was not simple.

Seeing that Louis wasn't scared by his words and didn't show obvious resistance, Gusain extended an invitation, "Would you like to join our group?"

"I'll think about it," Lumian replied with a smile.

He really intended to consider it. This might be a way to approach 0-01 without becoming an experimental subject.

He believed that this ragtag group, unable to resist the influence of 0-01, couldn't truly overthrow the Church's rule in Morora, but he needed chaos and opportunity.

These exiles could die, and the Church of Knowledge personnel here seemed to be puppets.

Gusain smiled in satisfaction.

"Being a prisoner in this open-air prison or becoming its ruler, being perpetually oppressed or pursuing freedom, it indeed requires careful consideration."

With that, Gusain glanced at the other side of the small square and said, "I must take my leave now. If you decide, hang a red cloth, the kind used to taunt bulls, at the door of the Carnivore bar."

With that, Gusain removed his hat, placed a hand on his chest, and bowed.

Watching him walk into a nearby alley at a leisurely pace, Lumian saw a group of black-robed enforcers hurrying from the opposite side of the small square.

"Did you see Gusain just now? He looks like a gentleman with a hat," the leader asked Lumian.

Lumian's smile widened, and he casually pointed to the alley Gusain had entered.

"Yes, he went that way."

The enforcers stared at Lumian for a couple of seconds before continuing to pursue Gusain.

Lumian raised his right hand, rubbed his chin, and murmured to himself, Gusain sensed the enforcers' arrival in advance, but I didn't...

Is that why he's managed to organize multiple uprisings without being caught?

Is it his ability, an item, or the special corruption from 0-01?

Lumian didn't linger in the small square, bidding farewell to Vijepan's corpse, and continued towards the possible location of the Abscessed Hand's head.

After turning into another street, he suddenly had a premonition and looked towards the edge of the city of Morora.

The ground shook violently, earth and stones surged up, swallowing several buildings and forming a mountain about ten meters high.

At the mountain's peak, thick dust mixed with smoke erupted, red lava flowed, emitting heat that Lumian could clearly feel even in the city center.

At the same time, the screams of humans from that direction echoed far and wide.

A volcanic eruption? Lumian was stunned.

He had thought the volcanic eruptions described in the 0-01 information came from the surrounding mountains, not from within the city on flat ground!

After a few seconds, the dust obscured the sky, plunging Morora back into darkness.

Passersby showed no extra reaction, merely covering their noses to block the dust, treating it as just another heavy rain.

Lumian shook his head as he watched.

In such living conditions, Gusain and his people hadn't thought of escaping, only planning to overthrow the Church's rule and replace it. No wonder this is a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact...

Lumian, who restored himself at six every morning, remained unafraid of the dust and resumed his steps.

He crossed the street and arrived at a square with multiple obelisks. In the dusty environment, he moved along the buildings around the square towards his destination.

Suddenly, he felt a resonance, a connection from his special powers.

Lumian quickly turned and looked at the classical building made of gray-white stones beside him.

At the top hung a large sign with words written in Lenburg: Dades Agricultural Company Below the sign, two glass windows suddenly opened, revealing a figure.

The figure, wearing a thin white shirt with the top two buttons undone despite the cold winter, had hair like it was stained with fresh blood, iron-black eyes, and sharp facial features, exuding a fierce aura.

No introduction was needed; Lumian identified the figure from the sign and the resonating aura.

The most dangerous criminal in Morora, former experimental subject Wanak!

Did the resonance just now come from the direct corruption of 0-01?

Did the law of convergence lead to this encounter?

Did Wanak escape the status of an experimental subject because he completely submitted to 0-01?

Is he now 0-01's proxy in Morora?

This Sealed Artifact, despite lacking wisdom, instinctively seeks opportunities to break free from its seal?

As Lumian's thoughts raced, the suspected Wanak suddenly transformed into a blazing-white flame spear, filled with destructive energy, and flew at him.

Lumian's figure instantly disappeared without reappearing.

He directly teleported closer to the Abscessed Hand's head. In his ears echoed the taunting voice of the suspected Wanak, "Coward! Chicken!"

Lumian snorted, not turning back to fight the man.

I'Ill first gather the Abscessed Hand's body!

He feared the intense battle might lead to unforeseen events, making contact with 0-01 before he collected all the body parts, resulting in uncontrollable consequences.

Moreover, the aura and the flame spear the suspected Wanak displayed suggested he might have a trace of godhood. Even if not truly Sequence 4, he had fundamentally differed from a Sequence 5 Beyonder.

Demigods couldn't approach 0-01, but maybe pseudo-demigod proxies created by 0-01 weren't subject to this rule!

Lumian looked ahead, finding himself in the boundless cemetery behind the Church of Knowledge, surrounded by gravestones and trees.

Uh... Lumian was momentarily stunned, then felt it made sense.

The bar owner-cum-chef having half of the Abscessed Hand's body and using it was an anomaly. Normally, anyone, even a felon, encountering a rotting corpse split into multiple parts would first call the enforcers to clean up the scene. The enforcers would then bury the body in this cemetery as part of the seal.

Of course, this was a normal assumption, excluding those with a penchant for corpses.

Lumian moved forward, approaching the source of the subtle connection.

During this, he remembered something.

Madam Magician said dangerous things might happen once the Abscessed Hand's body is gathered. It's best to complete this step within the City of Exiles to offset the corresponding risks with the presence of 0-01...

If I get the Hand Bro's head later, does that count as gathering the body?

Will that cause dangerous events?

Maybe I should wait a bit longer? Wait for dangerous and difficult-to-handle situations before teleporting back to gather Hand Bro's body to create unknown risks and muddy the waters?

I can't face the dangers of the Hand Bro alone; sharing is caring...

Also, Madam Magician implied that the Hand Bro might break the seal and enter Morora once its body is gathered?

Otherwise, how could it be considered complete...

Normally, not even a messenger can be summoned, nor a contract creature...

This might help me escape Morora...

As Lumian pondered, he stopped at a recently filled pit without a tombstone.

His contract mark told him a part of the Abscessed Hand's body was in this pit.

Seeing the unusually fresh marks on the pit's surface, Lumian felt a tightness in his chest. He crouched down, extended his hands, and performed a directional blast.

With the rumbling sound of explosions, he blew away a large amount of soil and unearthed a black wooden box from the bottom of the pit.

Opening the box, Lumian saw a highly decomposed, blue-black, swollen ear and a folded white paper.

Lumian unfolded the paper, seeing words written in Intisian:

"As expected, you want this rotten head.

"But unfortunately, I got it before you went to the Carnivore bar and hid it.

"Maybe you can ask me for it.

"Albus Medici."

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Chapter 800 - 800 New Waitress

800 New Waitress

Lumian admitted that he felt a bit provoked.

However, it was still acceptable. If his guess was right, he and Albus would eventually cross paths again regarding 0-01. It was better for the Abscessed Hand's head to be in Albus's possession than lost or hidden by some unknown person.

Lumian now regretted not acting against Albus at the Carnivore Bar. He had hesitated and wanted to use him.

At that time, it was hard to predict that Albus had already obtained the Abscessed Hand's head.

Silently, Lumian activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal, sensing the subtle connection between himself and the Abscessed Hand's body parts again.

He intended to use this to find Albus.

The feedback is all similar, no way to distinguish which is stronger, which might be Hand Bro's head… Did Albus do something to suppress the feedback? Or completely block it? Lumian slowly exhaled, taking the Abscessed Hand's ear from the black wooden box and placing it in his Traveler's Bag.

He carefully examined the area around the grave, hoping to find clues to Albus's whereabouts.

Unfortunately, Albus was also an experienced Hunter, very adept at covering his tracks.

Containing his emotions, Lumian turned back to the Carnivore Bar amidst the dust and clouds from the volcanic eruption.

As he stepped through the door, Lez, the human cook, who had found some wood to repair the shelves and bar counter, stopped working, hammer in hand, and turned to him.

"I hired a waitress."

"You can decide on that yourself," Lumian said, uninterested in the bar's operation. He only cared about getting three meals and free lodging under the

guise of being the boss.

Lez, ever diligent, added, “You know her. Julie, who came in with us.”

The “collector”? Lumian almost choked on his own saliva.

Why would a man hire such a “collector” as a waitress?

Won’t he feel a chill down there?

Before Lumian could ask Lez’s reasoning, Julie descended from upstairs.

She had changed into a dark slit dress she found from somewhere, with her chest barely concealed under a thin veil.

Her previously dirty face was now clean, and her long brown hair was simply tied up, her features clear in Lumian’s eyes.

Despite having been around two Demonesses for a long time, Lumian found himself impressed.

This female convict didn’t look perverse or mad, with slender brown eyebrows and brown eyes that seemed to hold a gentle autumn water, her skin delicate and white, her demeanor gentle and elegant, contrasting sharply with her enticing figure.

She was a uniquely beautiful woman, exuding an allure beyond normal.

Like a Demoness… Lumian had to admit Julie’s previous disguise with dirt and loose hair was quite effective.

Another case of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence…

Lumian sighed, responding to Julie’s tender, affectionate gaze, “Why do you want to be a waitress at my bar?”

“I need a job to support myself,” Julie smiled gently, as if they were in some city instead of Morora.

Lumian suddenly changed the topic.

“Why do you like collecting that part of men?”

Julie’s gentle brown eyes suddenly showed an indescribable madness.

She smiled and answered with a tone of longing, “I just want to reclaim what’s mine.”

Uh… another victim of the Demoness Sect? Now turned perpetrator…

She must have transformed from a man to a woman like Franca, but unlike Franca, she had severe psychological issues, resulting in her abnormal hobby? Lumian guessed while confirming that Julie was likely a Demoness, and not a low-level one, at least a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure.

Lumian then murmured, Your way of digesting Pleasure is to rape men and then cut it off at the climax to make them experience the fall from heaven to hell?

That fits the nature of a Demoness of Pleasure, but it's too direct and brutal, lacking the beauty of self-struggle…

How did the Church of Knowledge send a Demoness here as an ordinary rapist-murderer?

Was it intentional?

Right, based on my current mysticism knowledge, each god's pathway top has one to three great beings holding all the sequence powers, like Mr. Fool, The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the Great Mother, and the Mother Tree of Desire…

From this perspective, the Primordial Demoness-being adjacent to the Hunter pathway-trying to scheme 0-01 is understandable, perhaps inevitable. According to Madam Magician, 0-01 is the key to ascending to Red Priest and becoming the true god of the Hunter pathway…

In this case, once the Demoness Sect discovers Morora, they will definitely send witches below the demigod level to infiltrate here…

Why didn't they send anyone before, waiting until Julie and I were exiled together?

Perhaps the Primordial Demoness's revelation told them only by following me could they enter Morora, given I was specially sent by the Church of Knowledge without any checks?

No, more likely, Julie isn't the first or even the second Demoness to infiltrate Morora. The previous ones didn't complete their mission and gradually lost contact with the Demoness Sect…

If that's true, the Demonesses controlling the mirror world have it easier than me using the Mirror Cufflink and Mirror Mark to connect with the outside. Julie must have a lot of accumulated intelligence and plans…

From her, I might find opportunities and ways to approach 0-01 and leave a mark…

With these thoughts, Lumian smiled at Julie, who still had a hint of madness in her eyes, "I don't care what you want to reclaim or why, but since you chose to be my bar's waitress, you must follow my rules. First, no harassing customers during

business hours."

Julie looked a bit aggrieved but her eyes shone brightly, full of anticipation.

"What if they harass me?"

"Lez will throw them out. If they dare fight back, Lez knows how to cook them and will leave you the parts you want," Lumian said casually. "Or you can wait until the bar closes and find them yourself."

Julie licked her lips. "What's the second rule?"

"No harassing the boss." Lumian headed for the stairs to the second floor. "Lez will discuss your pay."

Julie seemed slightly disappointed. "I wanted to see if what I lost is with you."

Before Lumian could respond, she asked again, "Is it harassment if I invite you to view my collection?"

"Not interested," Lumian replied curtly.

He confirmed Julie's crimes weren't intentional to get exiled to Morora.

She had a genuine hobby, looking gentle and beautiful but twisted and mad inside.

After dark, Julie finished Lez's meticulously prepared dinner and praised it, "I've decided to seduce you last."

Her seduction was lethal.

Lez seemed a bit disappointed but sincerely asked, "If you're ever killed, can I have your body?"

"Sure," Julie agreed nonchalantly, her movements graceful and smile reserved.

She then looked at Lumian, blinking. "Boss, the bar hasn't reopened. Can I go out tonight?"

"That's your freedom." Lumian drank some wheat ale to suppress the sudden restlessness inside him.

He was now sure Julie was a Demoness of Affliction, having just used Charm on him.

If she approached again, he planned to Cull her without mercy.

Only by intimidating this Demoness of Affliction with strength and ferocity could he keep her in check.

Julie wiped her mouth with a white napkin, stood up, and left the Carnivore Bar.

After a few seconds, Lumian vanished from the table.

He first teleported then turned into a shadow creature, silently following Julie.

Julie walked elegantly, approaching a square where exiles gathered, feigning drunkenness.

The exiles couldn't take their eyes off this Demoness. A muscular man eagerly approached and chatted with Julie.

Julie drunkenly waggled her finger.

"I want to duel you."

"Sure," the man said joyfully, helping Julie leave for his home.

The other exiles didn't react in time, losing sight of the two.

Lumian didn't lose track, hiding outside the man's window.

He heard Julie's kitten-like moans, unlike the rough madness he imagined.

With an Ascetic's endurance, Lumian showed no abnormality until the man shouted loudly, nearing climax.

The next second, a piercing scream of intense pain erupted from the room.

Soon, Julie emerged, face flushed, eyes bright, her beauty overwhelming.

She held a bloody object, freezing it in crystal-clear ice, placing it in a small bag.

Lumian continued following Julie, who didn't attempt any counter-surveillance, arriving at the large square outside the Church of Knowledge.

She seemed to be waiting for something.

After a while, a team of black-robed enforcers emerged from the church, led by a tall, fair-skinned, restrained, beautiful woman.

Julie's eyes lit up, her face glowing with joy.

She approached the enforcers excitedly, shouting at the leader, "Celeste!

The tall woman in the black robe glanced at Julie indifferently, asking emotionlessly, "Who are you?"

Julie's expression froze.

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